JUSTICE LEAGUE!

#66

DID THEY SAVE THE SERIES – OR RUIN IT?

KEITH GIFFEN & ANDY HELFER

ROY THOMAS

EARLY DAYS AT MARVEL

A TALK WITH TOP ARTIST

TY TEMPLETON

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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UP FRONT

LYING FOR A LIVING

The profession of storyteller is an old one — probably the second oldest. The oldest profession is probably hunter. I'd say the proverbial "oldest profession" is really the third oldest profession.

Ages ago, before TV, movies, radio, the printed word, even before the written word, the main source of entertainment was the storyteller. I am also willing to bet that the stories most enjoyed by the listeners were heroic stories. Stories of man's struggle against strong forces and his eventual victory.

I am proud to continue such an ancient tradition.

I have been thinking recently about what storytelling really is. A unique profession. Storytellers earn their living by daydreaming. By thinking up and telling stories that others are interested in hearing.

In other words, storytellers get paid to lie.

Think about it. I write fiction. Fiction is a story that didn't really happen. Now, when you were a child and your mother asked you what you had been doing, if you told her a story that didn't really happen, you were lying. As a child, you got spanked for that. As an adult, you get paid. . . .

Life is weird sometimes.

Henry

— Henry Vogel

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"I did enjoy being *the* CONAN writer."

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Pencil panel from Roy's ALL-STAR SQUADRON (by Jerry Ordway).

ROY THOMAS

He's been there from MILLIE THE MODEL to CONAN THE BARBARIAN to THE YOUNG ALL-STARS, and few mainstream strips at Marvel and DC haven't felt his touch. He began in 1965, winning a fan contest at Charlton Comics, and made his home at Marvel before the end of the year. He took over from Stan Lee as editor-in-chief in 1972 and presided over an expansion program that tripled Marvel's lineup; the talent search wound up with people like Gerber, Englehart, Starlin, McGregor, Russell, Wolfman, Moench, Perez — and a certain publisher of this magazine.

Dann & Roy Thomas (circa 1987).

Photo: Del Farrow

All artwork accompanying this interview is © 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group, unless otherwise noted.

"Stan Lee believed very much in using

David Anthony Kraft. During the Shooter era he left Marvel for DC where he re-revived the JSA (and practically every other DC and Quality Golden Age hero) and made them work.

In a very real sense, Roy Thomas is living history. He was one of the first Big Name Fans of the early 1960s, one of the first fans to graduate to prodom, and a mainstay of comics for over twenty years. It's a safe bet that everybody reading this has also read a hefty amount of Roy Thomas stories, or is familiar with his movie work (CONAN THE DESTROYER and FIRE AND ICE). He's done a lot of work, and most of it has been of a very high calibre indeed.

I became acquainted with Roy during the short-lived ALL-STAR COMICS INDEX project for ICG. (Roy was, incidentally, nice enough to contribute a foreword to the first and only issue.) As we share, in different degrees, a love for Golden Age comics and heroes, this interview was probably inevitable. . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *There is one question I want to ask before Dann has to leave, for both of you, but particularly Roy: Do you tend to identify with certain characters on the comics you've scripted, like Conan and Dann in WHAT IF? #13, or Atom and Firebrand II in the second ALL-STAR SQUADRON ANNUAL? Care to comment on the cameos of yourself, Roy, in AVENGERS and DEFENDERS?*

ROY THOMAS: Well, I don't know if that's identification. I don't know if I ever really *identified* with Conan exactly. I mean *naturally* you tend to identify to a certain extent with a character you're doing, but I don't think I identify with Conan any more than other people would identify with Superman or the Green Lantern or somebody else. You know, I was hardly the first person to put myself in a comic book.

LOU: *Right, everybody does it.*

ROY: Yeah. At that time maybe fewer people were doing it without turning away, like Stan and Jack had put themselves in but it was always with their backs turned. It made no sense, the President of the United States could have his face in a comic book but for some reason **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby**, you know, their faces were too holy. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Well, it was a long time before they'd show the President's face in a Marvel comic, for instance when they'd have* **Jack Kennedy** they'd show the back of his chair and then his hairline.

ROY: I guess one of the first times somebody was shown in a book there would have been when my first wife Jeanie and I were in AVENGERS, but the reason for that, really, was just coincidence. I was looking for an excuse to put myself into a book, I was doing a story with **John Buscema** that dealt with the then traditional Rutland parades and parties and various things — which later on became a comic-book tradition for a number of years — and because we really *were* there we showed up in a panel or two. The next thing you know we had the comics where **Len Wein** and **Marv Wolfman** and **Gerry Conway** and **Cary Bates** were all stumbling around the Rutland woods! *(Laughter.)* You know, I always kept it down to a kind of a minimum with a couple of lines because I didn't want to *become* a comic character. Later on, by '75 or early '76, I remember having a lot of fun with **George Perez** when we put ourselves into FANTASTIC FOUR using the Marvel offices. But otherwise I haven't got too much interest in doing that kind of thing anymore, and I don't think Dann has any great interest to see herself in the comics.

DANN THOMAS: Oh, I never did. *(Laughter.)*

ROY: It was not her idea to name Firebrand Dannette Reilly, that was mine. At the time it seemed like a good name because it was an obscure name, Dannette is certainly not a common name, so it seemed rather unlikely that most people were going to hear Dann in some other way, but later on when she began to write there were credits under that name. But now it's okay, it's obsolete, because Firebrand may be Dannette Reilly but Dann legally changed her name a couple of years ago *to* Dann.

But, you know, when you do so many comics for so many years — and I certainly don't hold any records or anything compared to **Kanigher** and Stan and a number of other people — but you do so many of them you look for other things. I don't take it anymore personally perhaps than a lot of other people writing comics, maybe I'm more up front about it where other people do it but maybe they don't push it. I thought, "Well, why not put myself in there, why not do some little personal things." A lot of that I picked up from **Stan Lee** because he believed very much in it too, using a personality of his own and the artists in the comics. It worked very well at Marvel; maybe it eventually became a self parody of sorts, but it really was very effective in his broad

Roy & Jeanie Thomas (from AVENGERS #83).

OH, BY THE WAY-- THE OUT-OF-TOWNERS DRESSED AS SPIDER-MAN AND MRS. FANTASTIC ARE ROY AND JEANIE THOMAS!
THEY CAME ALL THE WAY FROM FROM THE BIG BAD CITY FOR RUTLAND'S ELEVENTH HALLOWEEN PARADE!
THE AVENGERS! OH WOW!
WHICH ONE OF YOU IS MRS. PEEL?
COOL IT, KID!

personality. It worked well at Marvel."

I SEE YOUR NEW PROSPECT ENTERTAINED AT AN ORPHANS' FUND PARTY!! I DO HOPE HE DOESN'T DISAPPOINT YOU LIKE THE OTHERS!
WHO CARES? I'LL RUN HIM THROUGH THE HOOP AND SEE IF HE CLICKS! --AND, IF HE DOES-- BABY, I STEP IN AND FLY!!
IMAGINE! --A SUPER ESCAPE ARTIST!! IS HE VERY GOOD?
WELL, I WOULDN'T CALL HIM A BUM!! HE'S GOT SOME GREAT GIMMICKS!!
HIS GIMMICKS IMPLY GREAT RISK!! THIS VENTURE COULD END QUICKLY!!
SO HE BREAKS A LEG OR DIES!! I'LL JUST SIP MY MARTINI BY THE OCEAN-- AND WAIT FOR THE NEXT FISH TO JUMP!!
THEY ALWAYS DO, SIR! --HOWEVER, I'VE A FEELING THAT SCOTT FREE WILL PROVE QUITE EDIBLE!!
FASCINATING! IMAGE IS THE THING, HOUSE-ROY! WHY-- I LOOK ALMOST --NOLY! I'M READY FOR YOU AGAIN-- WORLD!!

© 1968 DC Comics, Inc.

Funky "STAN LEE" Flashman & Houseroy (Thomas?) from Jack Kirby's Mister Miracle #6 (1972).

outlines.

LOU: *You wouldn't be talking J. Jonah Jameson now.* (Laughter.)

ROY: Oh, no, I wasn't thinking of J. Jonah Jameson, I don't think Stan ever thought of himself as J. Jonah Jameson. Everyone *else* thought of Stan as J. Jonah Jameson, that's why he became more and more lovable, you know. I think Stan thought of himself as Dr. Doom. *(Laughter.)* But all of these characters have a tendency to become more lovable when you start identifying with them. *(Brief break while Dann takes her leave.)*

LOU: *Well, Roy, let's move over to your history, why don't you sketch out a bit of biography for me — like your early life, what led you to a career as a comics writer, and a Big Name fan before that, one of the few Big Name fans in the early '60s.*

ROY: Well . . . I hate to just go over the same things — kid who grew up in Jackson, Missouri, started reading comics, eventually got interested in doing one of the very earliest comics fanzines.

LOU: *What specifically inspired you to do ALTER-EGO?*

ROY: The thing that inspired me to do ALTER-EGO was that **Jerry Bails,** a science professor at Wayne State University Detroit, and I started corresponding in about 1960, through **Julie Schwartz** and to a lesser extent **Gardner Fox,** and *he* decided to do ALTER-EGO. He named it with the hyphen, which was not the real spelling, after he took a trip to New York in late '60 I think it was. I was envying him going to New York, going to DC's offices, seeing **Mike Nichols** and **Elaine May** on off Broadway, seeing CAMELOT with **Richard Burton** and **Julie Andrews.** And then he came up with this idea of this newsletter to be called ALTER-EGO, which *quickly* grew into a fanzine. It was inspired in *part* by the model of **Dick Lupoff** and his wife's fanzine XERO.

"Mort Weisinger offered me a job as assistant editor of SUPERMAN."

© 1963-64 Bails, Foss and Kubert

Joe Kubert's cover for Bails/Foss' ALTER EGO #6, 1963-64.

LOU: *Right, ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME.*

ROY: Yes, the series of articles; I later did one and of course they were collected into book form with **Don Thompson** as coeditor. So I didn't start ALTER-EGO at all, I was called assistant editor. I did the first cover, and I did this takeoff on the Justice League, and as a matter of fact a couple of years ago when **Steve Gerber** was going to do SPECTRE he told me that he was with my permission going to incorporate a couple of the things I did on the Spectre, which was fine by me. But then when Jerry left of course it went over to someone else, **Ron Foss,** and eventually I came back and took it over and became the publisher for the first time, about a year before I turned pro. It had a great *effect* because it was sending those issues in, along with the various letters and other contacts, which suddenly led to some interest at a time when there wasn't a lot of contact between the comics professionals and comics fans. And the next thing you know **Mort Weisinger** wrote me a letter and offered me a job as assistant editor of SUPERMAN, so I went to work for him.

LOU: *Of course the first one you had in a pro comic was when Charlton ran that contest back in '65 —*

ROY: But it didn't *appear* until after two or three Marvel stories, because of their lead time; but the first sale *was* the Charlton Son of Vulcan story, and the second was the Charlton Blue Beetle story. I had been teaching high school in St. Louis and suddenly — I get a little bit confused about the time but it was around the same time as Charlton had its contest, and the notice that they sent out to fanzine editors about submitting stories — so I did one of Son of Vulcan because I liked the concept of the character, and they bought it.

LOU: *Well, I do remember that specific contest because I saw it way back in the original issue of RBCC, they advertised it, and in fact I almost entered it myself with a Captain Atom script.*

ROY: It was really strange because they played up a big thing on the cover, you know — "Charlton Challenges" and so on — but then in the credits it's **R. Thomas.** They couldn't spell out a nine-letter name. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Yeah, they didn't like "oy" or something.*

ROY: Right. *(Laughter.)* But it *was* fun, and it was fun recently in INFINITY to do a sequel to the Blue Beetle story, and I got to do the Son of Vulcan in DC CHALLENGE just for old time sake. It was a nice enough character in terms of concept.

LOU: *And then after that contest you got the letter from Mort Weisinger and went to DC for a total of... three weeks?*

ROY: No, *two* weeks, only one of them I was paid for, and that was a four-day week at that. *(Laughter.)* It wasn't a very long period of employment, and even less so a happy one. But yes, I suddenly got a letter from **Mort Weisinger,** the editor of all of the SUPERMAN comics at the time — with whom I had previously exchanged maybe about one letter when I was interested in getting a piece of artwork or something once from a LOIS LANE **Kurt Schaffenberger** story, "Herco the Monster" or something like that, because it reminded me of an old CAPTAIN MARVEL story — and he offered me this job as the assistant editor. I didn't know at the time I'd be replacing **Nelson Bridwell,** whom he was letting go after about a year, and I accepted. I had just accepted previously, a couple of weeks or so before, a fellowship to do graduate work at George Washington University in Washington D.C., in foreign relations, a scholarship a friend of mine got me, so

"It wasn't a very long employment, even less so a happy one."

I want to thank you for sending me the ALLEY AWARDS results, even though you robbed me of the pleasure of swiping Stan Lee's copy as I do with all the fanzines that are sent to him.

Spider and Strange are happy about the favorable comments and hope we will do better next year - without having to threaten anyone or have Strange put a spell on Fandom. Thanks again.

Sincerely, Steve Ditko

A letter (with illustration) to ALTER EGO from Steve Ditko.

he was astonished because it took me only about fifteen minutes to decide to accept this job offer in New York for $110 a week, which became inexplicably $100 a week when I arrived. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *But that went farther then than it does now.*

ROY: Yes, but on the other hand the $10 was more then too. Anyway, I kept the scholarship kind of in my pocket because had things not worked out that summer I could have still picked it up, so it wasn't as risky maybe as it seemed, and I went to New York in June of 1965 and worked for a couple of weeks for DC, one of which they never have paid me for. **Weisinger** had told me to come up whenever I wanted to, I told him when I was coming, then when I got there he told me he couldn't pay me until starting the *next* week. It was a very unpleasant start to a situation that went downhill from there.

Mort was well known for being sadistic; he was a very talented man and also a malevolent toad. The things I saw him do to other people, like **Nelson Bridwell,** I wasn't going to stick around forever if I had an alternative. I didn't particularly think I had one, and **Julie Schwartz** and others were giving me a lot of encouragement because they knew how Mort could be; and, you know, I met **Otto Binder** and **Gardner Fox** and **Julie Schwartz** and people like that, that was okay. But fortunately I had wanted to meet **Stan Lee,** because despite my admiration for **Fox, Broome, Schwartz** and all the others I felt the best comics at the time were being written, at the very least, and in some ways drawn and produced generally, at Marvel — though I liked the DC characters as well or better. So I wanted to meet this **Stan Lee** guy. I *knew* about **Jack Kirby,** but I was curious to meet **Stan Lee.**

LOU: *What was it like meeting him?*

ROY: Well, I didn't get to meet him right away. The first thing I did was to drop him a line to say maybe let's get together for a drink — we had exchanged maybe a brief letter or something because of ALTER-EGO — but Stan doesn't do a lot of socializing with fans and so forth, even less back then. He said he knew of me and so forth and I should take the writing test they had. A couple of days later I went by just for the heck of it, I really wasn't looking for a job — things hadn't gone quite as far downhill as they *were* to go between **Weisinger** and me, I was still planning on toughing it out — but it's hard to resist a challenge to do some writing, which was several pages of dialogue over **Jack Kirby** stats from FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #2. So I went in and I sort of worked my way up the ladder.

The first person I met was **Flo Steinberg,** whom I met one lunch hour,

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"Nothing could stop Stan, not even a total blackout."

Gil Kane art for ALTER EGO.

and I picked up the test from her. I took it home and I think it was the next day I brought it back, I had banged it out after having dinner with **Phil Seuling** way out at Coney Island, when I came back I banged out on my little typewriter on a *chair* by my bed with my back aching. *(Laughter.)* So I typed up these four pages just kind of for a lark, I didn't spend a lot of time on them, came over the next day and I had worked my way up to **Sol Brodsky**, who came out and accepted them. Then I went away and the next day, which was a Friday — it was only a four-day week because it was after the July Fourth weekend — I was at DC working away proofreading a **Jim Mooney** drawn Supergirl story when I got a call from Flo, whose voice was very recognizable, I knew at once, asking me if I could come by during my lunch hour that day. I figured I had an hour, it was only a few blocks away, so I went down there.

It turned into a longer meeting because about ten minutes after I was there Stan offered me a job, basically just saying, "What do I have to do to hire you away from DC?" Well, by this stage things *had* gone downhill enough that I was ready to leave DC, so I said, "Just offer me the $110 **Weisinger** offered me and reneged on." *(Laughter.)* So I went back — even if they'd have just offered $100 I would have taken it — so I went back and sat down in my office and just began proofreading away again. I was about 30 minutes late coming back from lunch because even then I was independent enough that I figured there was no sense in worrying about it, so **Weisinger** called me down to his office, which was at the other end of the hall, and I went down and he started talking. He was *trying* to be a little bit nicer, I think **Ed Eisenberg** and maybe Julie had talked to him about coming down a little bit too hard on me — and I said it was all academic because I had accepted a job to work for Marvel. I gave him an indefinite notice because while I thought he ought to get **Nelson Bridwell** back I wasn't going to leave him in the lurch because they had advanced me some money to come to New York and get settled on. **Weisinger** immediately kicked me out, so an hour after I'd left Stan I was back there picking up a MILLIE THE MODEL assignment for the weekend, and I've had a lot of fun ever since.

LOU: *So, even before your first story was printed by Charlton, you got hired by Marvel. Why don't you paint me a picture of that ancient Bullpen and what it was like to work there in those Valhalla-like times before you became editor.*

ROY: It was a small Bullpen then. **Marie Severin** had just recently started coming in every day to do art corrections and I

Y'KNOW, GIL, THOSE CONAN STORIES ARE A BLAST TO DO--BUT THERE MUST'VE BEEN A LOT MORE GOING ON, BACK DURING HOWARD'S MYTHICAL HYBORIAN AGE OF 12,000 YEARS AGO.
SOMEBODY'S GOING TO, ROY. US, NO LESS.
IT'S A SHAME SOMEBODY DOESN'T WRITE AND DRAW ONE OF THOSE ADVENTURES.
I IMAGINE YOURSELF A BEDOUIN! DAY IN AQUILONIA--THE PROVINCE OF ASKLAN--THE CLASH AND CLANGOR OF A KNIGHTS TOURNEY--
AND THEN, ABOVE THE TUMULT--A STRIDENT SHOUT--!

From CONAN #12's back-up story (with Roy and Gil).

"Stan doesn't do a lot of socializing with

The original "unpublished" cover for CAPTAIN MARVEL #10 (by M. Severin).

think she did some coloring then. There was some woman there in charge of industrial comics, we were doing something for Hojo-Cola put out by Howard Johnson's

LOU: *I remember that, the most ridiculously named cola in the world.* (Laughter.)

ROY: Hojo-Cola, yes. I actually *drank* some of the stuff occasionally, it wasn't very good but it was free. *(Laughter.)* Let's see, some of these people had not been staff, Flo of course had been coming in for a year or two as corresponding secretary. It was really just a couple of rooms and Stan's office, which was as big as both of them or more combined, and much more nicely furnished. **Sol Brodsky** had been coming in for some months on a regular basis. That was pretty well all who were there, except for **Steve Skeates** who had been hired from college just a few weeks before.

LOU: *And he either dropped out or got fired a couple of weeks later.*

ROY: I suppose that was it. Basically Stan did sort of like take him off staff, and there really wasn't much work for him shortly after that; and it wasn't so much that we were *competing* because Stan was then looking for a replacement for him right away. It was more a case of somehow or another Stan and Steve just didn't quite mesh, any more than Stan and **Denny O'Neil** did later. I was the major reason why Denny ended up working there. Somehow there was just a lack of chemistry between some people and I fit in a little bit better, I don't know exactly why, and maybe that's good, maybe that's bad.

LOU: *Well, one thing Cat Yronwode and I were batting around one afternoon some years back is that around that time or shortly before Stan would bring in these Golden Age greats like Bob Powell, Wally Wood, Carl Burgos, trumpet them mightily, and maybe a year or so later they'd be out because none of them seemed to mesh with Stan and the Bullpen at that time.*

ROY: Yeah. Stan *loved* Wally's work so much that somewhere around a year later he actually put his name on a cover of AVENGERS, when he was inking **Dick Ayers,** and that got **Dick Ayers'** name on the cover as well. That was something Stan almost *never* did. It was something like, "Wait till you see **Wally Wood's** inking of **Dick Ayers'** pencils!" He was a big admirer of Wally, although he had Flo following Wally around the offices, hovering near him so when he'd slump in a chair with a cigarette she'd be there to catch the ashes. *(Laughter.)* Stan was fanatic about not having hot ashes hit the floor, which was understandable. **Bill Everett** drove him crazy the same way later on.

But somehow or another there was a certain lack of things. I don't know, you just have to sort of mesh a certain way and I was pretty amenable — it's not that Denny wasn't or Steve wasn't, just somehow or another they didn't quite click with Stan the same way. Again, it wasn't that I ended up working there *instead* of them, because as soon as anybody was gone somebody else was ready to be hired — **Gary Friedrich, Steve Gerber,** different people, people I knew, people I didn't know — and most of them didn't work out that well. So I wasn't first, I was second after **Skeates** — of the fans who came in — but I sort of *took.* And I was able to send Steve up to Charlton because I had some other assignments from Charlton, which DC had not wanted me to honor, Charlton only paid $4.00 a page and DC was paying me $10.00 or so, and they didn't want me working for a competing organization. So I sent Steve up there. Steve did click very well with **Dick Glor-**

fans and so forth, even less back then."

Wally Wood inking Don Heck's AVENGERS #20 (1965) — a proud moment for Stan Lee (NOTE COVER BLURB.)

dano, and I think I sent one or two other people up there, mostly writers, and most of them ended up working for DC or Marvel later on.

LOU: *Then we had the circuit about three times during a four-year period, that was fun to watch because they were pretty talented people. Okay, your first Marvel was MILLIE THE MODEL?*

ROY: Actually the book was MODELING WITH MILLIE. I did one or two of that and MILLIE THE MODEL and the last issue of PATSY AND HEDY, just a handful. The last thing I was working on was one issue of one of the MILLIE books, I was working on it during the November '65 blackout. I was going to go home and finish it that night, **Denny O'Neil** and I were rooming together with **Dave Kaler** down in the East Village — we were all sort of like there temporarily in sort of like a ground level loft — and we got stuck for three hours in the car, then we got out and walked home. We figured the hell with it, we all went out to a restaurant nearby called The Red Lantern and forgot about it.

Well, the next day we found out two things: one was that Stan had got a little candle brigade there and he'd written like five or ten pages of THOR during the same time we were goofing off. *(Laughter.)* Nothing could stop Stan, not even a total blackout. And then he apologized to **Sol Brodsky,** the production manager, because he had only done five or ten pages! *(Laughter.)* And the other thing was that I'd lost the rest of the very easy MILLIE book. Stan hadn't liked the first one that I did very much, but he liked the second one and was pretty happy with it, and then this third or fourth one **Denny O'Neil** was given to finish because Stan had decided I was ready for something else, and he gave me

"Ditko and Stan were not speaking, had not been

I'D BETTER TRY A GROUND APPROACH, RATHER THAN AN AERIAL ONE--
DOO
--IF THE BLACK KNIGHT IS MY MAN, HE'S JUST LIABLE TO HAVE HIS OWN PERSONAL RADAR SCANNING THE AIR FOR ME!
OH--OH! LOOKS LIKE HE OUT-GUESSED ME AGAIN! THERE'S EVEN A BRAND-NEW PATH LEADING TO THE CASTLE! SO MUCH FOR MY ABORTIVE ATTEMPTS AT A SNEAK ATTACK!
THE WAY I'M BEING LED TO THE SLAUGHTER, I ALMOST EXPECT TO SEE A LADY'S WHITE SCARF FLUTTERING IN THE BREEZE FROM AN OVERHEAD BRANCH!

Roy's first work with Gene "The Dean" Colan (TALES OF SUSPENSE #73).

SGT. FURY. In between I *had* dialogued an IRON MAN story for TALES OF SUSPENSE #73, a Gene Colan story, but Stan rewrote it maybe 50% or so, enough that there never really was a writer's credit, it just sort of said "by Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, Marie Severin" — who had colored it I think — "Gene Colan, and everybody else."

LOU: *A generic Bullpen thing.*

ROY: Yes. My first Marvel superhero story, it didn't even exactly *have* a full writer's credit, it was sort of Stan and me both — probably the only story ever at Marvel that never had differentiated credits. *(Laughter.)* Stan just put everybody's name in there and that was it, you know. And that led to two or three issues of Steve Ditko's DOCTOR STRANGE — which I was happy to get to write because he left the company so soon afterwards, it was the only chance I got to work with him.

LOU: *How was working with Steve?*

ROY: It was strange because there was no communication. He and Stan were not speaking, had not been for six months or a year before I came there, which was something that neither I nor anybody else much outside the field knew.

LOU: *Why was that?*

ROY: They had argued so much about plotlines, in particular certain things that Steve wanted to do, like I think he wanted Green Goblin to just turn out to be some nondescript nothing character.

LOU: *Oh? I read a John Romita interview in which he said the Goblin was originally supposed to be Ned Leeds but Steve didn't like that idea and started drawing the it to where it would be Norm Osborn.*

ROY: That's probably true, too, but I don't recall offhand. At one stage he had wanted it to be somebody nondescript that wasn't *anybody.* But Stan respected Steve tremendously, his work, and he felt like

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for six months or a year before I came there."

THE FANTASTIC FEAR ARE WALKING, AS USUAL, THROUGH THE STREETS OF THEIR BELOVED NEW YORK CITY....
HEY, THINGAMABOB, WHAT'LL YOU HAVE? MOAN, THE CRIME BUSINESS IS SO BLACK, IT'S OFF LIKELY!
YEAH! I'M GETTIN' SICK AND TIRED OF FLASHIN' FOR DOIN' NOTHIN'!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I'D HAVE TO FLUNK SCORCH!
ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT CITY FIRES!
HE TOO, BELOVED HUSBAND!
BUT LOOK, THERE'S A MASKED ROBBER!
WAS A BORDER, YOU MEAN? IF THAT'S WHAT GOT HIM, BEFORE I COULD REACH HIM!
HEY...WATCH IT, INVISIBLE PEARL! I STUMBLED OVER YOU AGAIN!
IT'S CLOBBERING TIME!
DON'T DOME, HUBBY!
YEAH! AFTER ALL IT WAS US WHO STARTED THE WHOLE THING!

Before Not Brand Echh there was a series of spoofs by: Thomas & (Len) Brown, writers, with art by Gil Kane & Wally Wood (FANTASTIC FEAR).

just let Steve go ahead and plot the stories -- they weren't really worried about that. Stan had his corner, Steve had his, and when Steve came in to quit there was a note on **Sol Brodsky**'s desk to give him a raise. But Steve left and then claimed he was underpaid. *(Laughter.)* And of course he was.

LOU: *Everybody was at that time.*

ROY: Sure. At the same time there wasn't a lot of money coming in, comics weren't exactly a big deal at 12 and 15 cents.

LOU: *They just barely paid their way I imagine.*

ROY: We were doing quite well. I had discovered at DC, to my *shock*, that for the second time in about a decade or so DC through independent distribution was distributing a line of books that percentage-wise was outselling their own: the first had been EC back in the '50s, and now it was Marvel. They were having meetings -- to which I was not invited of course but heard a little about indirectly -- about what to do about this mounting competition. I hadn't really thought about the fact that Marvel was really starting to put the bite into DC to the point where DC was beginning to feel that their own sales were being affected, or that Marvel was potentially hurting them. It was such an *ironic* thing since they were *carrying* Marvel in order to show that DC and the ID were not a monopoly, otherwise Marvel would have probably been dead by the late '50s.

LOU: *One thing I heard from Wally Wood, I believe, was that Tower got killed off by its distribution, which was to say that* somebody *had asked the distributors not to carry Tower anymore.*

ROY: I never heard anything about that, I don't know. I was sorry to see it, I *loved* the size of those comics although I didn't care much for the product. I mean I liked Wally's work and he had some good artists here and there, and my friend **Len Brown**, one of the first people I met in

Below (left & right): Thomas teams (again) with Gene Colan on this BATMAN story (pencils & inks).

"HIS GIMMICK WAS A CLEVER ONE -- HE USED STORM-SEWER CONTRACTS AS AN EXCUSE FOR TUNNELING INTO BANKS.
"ONCE WE FIGURED OUT HIS M.O., SUPERMAN, ROBIN AND I TRICKED HIM INTO DIGGING HIS WAY STRAIGHT TO JAIL."
"HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN PAROLED BY NOW."
"WAY BACK IN WORLD'S FINEST #80, 1956."

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"Ditko plotted the two DOCTOR STRANGEs I wrote,

IN THE MEANTIME, WHAT ABOUT OUR REAL MUCHLY MISTREATED MUTANTS? LET'S NOT FORGET ABOUT THEM--
WE'VE GOT TO GET FREE, SOMEHOW!
I HOPE SHE SUCCEEDS! THEY'RE TOO STRONG FOR MY ICE POWER TO AFFECT!
HOLD ONTO YOUR GOGGLES, CYKE! MARVEL GIRL'S GIVING HANK'S CUFFS A GO TELEKINETICALLY!
I REALIZE THIS IS HARDLY THE APPROPRIATE TIME--BUT THAT TICKLES!
QUIET, ALL OF YOU! I'VE GOT TO HAVE COMPLETE CONCENTRATION!
ANY LUCK AT ALL, JEAN?
NEGATIVE, ANGEL--
WHOEVER DESIGNED THESE SHACKLES DID SO WITH ME IN MIND! THEY'RE TOO COMPLICATED FOR ME TO UNDO WITHOUT FIRST HAVING STUDIED THE LOCKS!
IF ONLY WE COULD MANAGE TO MENTALLY CONTACT THE PROFESSOR!

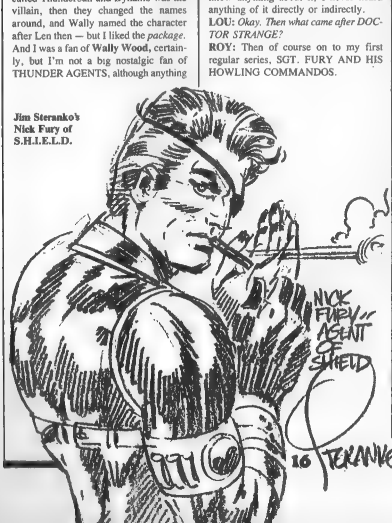
Roy Thomas teams with Werner Roth (pencils & plot) from X-MEN #23.

New York, wrote the first couple of Dynamo stories — actually he was then called Thunderball and Dynamo was the villain, then they changed the names around, and Wally named the character after Len then — but I liked the *package*. And I was a fan of **Wally Wood**, certainly, but I'm not a big nostalgic fan of THUNDER AGENTS, although anything illegal that was done to Tower I would have been very much against. But I don't know anything about it, I never heard anything of it directly or indirectly.

LOU: *Okay. Then what came after DOCTOR STRANGE?*

ROY: Then of course on to my first regular series, SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS.

Jim Steranko's Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D.



LOU: *Right, I remember that.*

ROY: It was one of those things that just kind of grew, you know.

LOU: *And then the first assignment you got of a superhero book was X-MEN, right?*

ROY: I guess it was, yeah, starting with a story that had already *basically* been plotted by **Werner Roth** from a notion of Stan's; Werner had just taken over recently from **Jack Kirby** layouts. Stan — once Jack stopped doing the layouts on the books — quite often drifted away from them. That happened on SGT. FURY and then X-MEN and then not too long later, AVENGERS. He did a few stories with Werner and then he decided it was time to pass it on to *me*, and I had a lot of fun with it. Again, it took me a little while to get into it, two or three stories were a little... there was a little difficulty. At first Werner was going to go on plotting the stories and then I said that didn't make any sense, I was the writer and I wanted to plot my own stories, not accept what an artist gave me. It didn't matter that much to Stan but it mattered to me.

Stan was very much a sort of roll-your-own type of guy, just making it up as he goes along, and to him it didn't make any *difference* who plotted the story, it was a Marvel story. And nobody worried very much about credit, nobody very much was asking about credit until later on. I think both Steve and Jack both liked the idea of — if not receiving credit as the plotter or the cowriter or whatever — at least not having Stan listed as writer, and that was

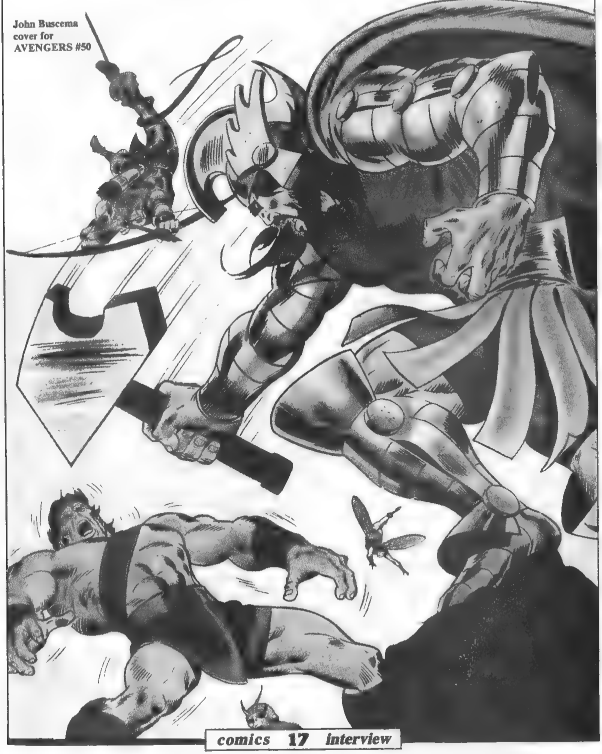
© 1988 MEG (Artwork © 1973 J. Steranko)

I felt a little embarrassed having my name first."

the birth of the **Stan Lee, Jack Kirby** Productions where they just solved the whole problem by not solving it, by ignoring it.

LOU: *One thing, comparing you and Stan back in those days, Stan basically was a pretty eloquent guy as far as comic books went, but you brought to it your expertise with Shakespeare, Lovecraft and all the rest.*

ROY: **Lovecraft** I never even *heard* of until a few years later. *(Laughter.)* Actually it was **Allen Brodsky,** who later wrote IRON MAN, who introduced me to **Lovecraft** in the late '60s or early '70s or something. I had certainly known of a lot of things *like* it, but I was unfamiliar with the name **Lovecraft.** But Stan was well read, he could quote a lot of passages



John Buscema cover for AVENGERS #50

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"I have a real soft spot in my heart for AVENGERS."

from THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM, a few from **Shakespeare**. He had liked those things, but basically he had come from an earlier era where you quit school after high school for the most part and went to work. I was the first from my family, at least for the 100 years or so they had been in this country from Germany, to go to college. Nowadays, just a few decades later, it seems very commonplace, but at that time it was a little bit more of an accomplishment.

LOU: *Yeah, after the Depression was the first generation that could afford to go to college.*

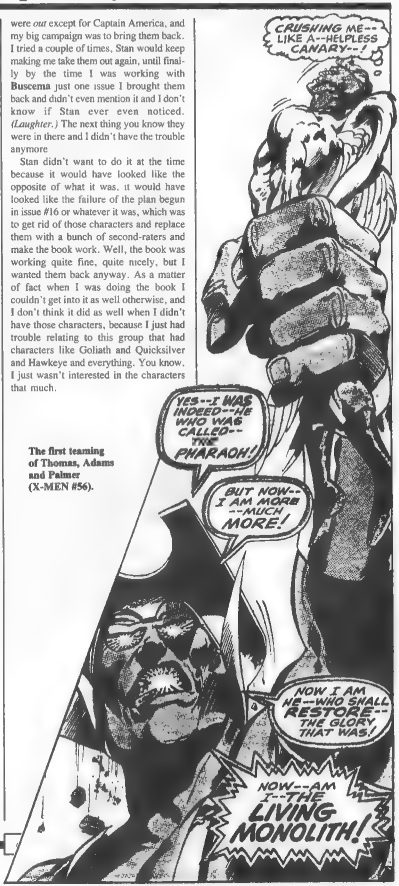
ROY: Yeah, right, and I just went to a little college and I wasn't very ambitious about it; I got through in three years so I could go to work. But still I had gone and that gave me a little bit of an advantage, and also my interests were at least partly academic — I've always been sort of a dilettante in that way, my IQ scores had always been quite high — but at the same time I really was always kind of lackadaisical about it. That's the same way I drifted into almost becoming an Egyptologist about a year or so earlier. I was accepted by the University of Chicago, into its Oriental Institute which studies ancient Egypt and the Near East, and if I'd had the money to go to school I would have drifted into that. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Well, my favorite series of that time that you did of course was AVENGERS, which was your flagship title for about 70 issues.*

ROY: That was because it reminded me of the Justice Society. Once again I inherited it from a story or two basically plotted by **Don Heck** from a little discussion with Stan, in the middle of the Living Laser story. I didn't even plot the first issue that I wrote, this was true with almost every book I wrote in that period. **Ditko** plotted the two DOCTOR STRANGEs I wrote, I felt a little embarrassed about having my name first, but on the other hand you just open up a peck of troubles if you start fooling around with that kind of thing, and again it didn't make that much difference at the time. The writer's name came first and the artist's name came second, that's just the way it was, and I'm sure that's bothered **Jack Kirby** from time to time too, and I don't say that he's wrong.

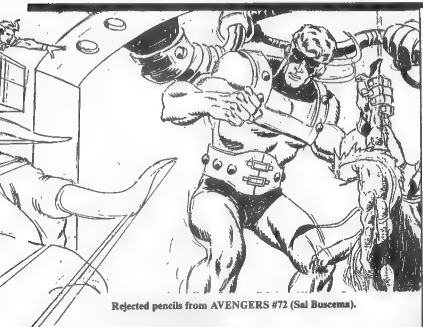
I was not as interested in X-MEN, it was never a big favorite of mine then or now, and I liked AVENGERS because I liked the idea of doing those big heroes, Thor and Iron Man and Captain America. Of course when I took over the strip they were *out* except for Captain America, and my big campaign was to bring them back. I tried a couple of times, Stan would keep making me take them out again, until finally by the time I was working with **Buscema** just one issue I brought them back and didn't even mention it and I don't know if Stan ever even noticed. *(Laughter.)* The next thing you know they were in there and I didn't have the trouble anymore

Stan didn't want to do it at the time because it would have looked like the opposite of what it was, it would have looked like the failure of the plan begun in issue #16 or whatever it was, which was to get rid of those characters and replace them with a bunch of second-raters and make the book work. Well, the book was working quite fine, quite nicely, but I wanted them back anyway. As a matter of fact when I was doing the book I couldn't get into it as well otherwise, and I don't think it did as well when I didn't have those characters, because I just had trouble relating to this group that had characters like Goliath and Quicksilver and Hawkeye and everything. You know. I just wasn't interested in the characters that much.


CRUSHING ME--LIKE A--HELPLESS CANARY--!
YES--I WAS INDEED--HE WHO WAS CALLED--THE PHARAOH!
BUT NOW--I AM MORE--MUCH MORE!
NOW I AM HE--WHO SHALL RESTORE--THE GLORY THAT WAS!
NOW--AM I--THE LIVING MONOLITH!

The first teaming of Thomas, Adams and Palmer (X-MEN #56).

"I wanted to do something very much like the



Rejected pencils from AVENGERS #72 (Sal Buscema).

LOU: *That didn't come across. I still remember them as very well written stories.*

ROY: Well, I *was* getting into them, but I was just always constantly looking for excuses to bring in Thor and Iron Man, you know. I have a real soft spot in my heart for AVENGERS because it was a superhero group and I'd always liked that ever since the days of the Justice Society and so forth, and I fought long and hard and sometimes sneakily to bring back Thor and Iron Man. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *And the first time came in the first AVENGERS ANNUAL, right?*

ROY: Probably so, yes, and of course that was like doing an issue of ALL-STAR COMICS.

LOU: *That seemed like a lot of fun.*

ROY: Yeah, we had a lot of fun. Then soon after that **John Buscema** came in, just really to do a fill-in issue or two, and I liked his work so much that we moved on to something else — which I'm sure he didn't mind at that stage, nobody liked much drawing group books anyway — and then John became the AVENGERS artist. John never liked *doing* AVENGERS or group books, I think he probably hated FANTASTIC FOUR even more than AVENGERS, and then SPIDER-MAN more than FF, always has; but at the same time he did them very well.

LOU: *Some of my favorites were the Yellowjacket story in which you introduced Goliath as Yellowjacket and married him to the Wasp at long last —*

ROY: Yeah, I wrote the dialogue for a goodly portion of that wedding issue on my honeymoon cruise in the Caribbean.

LOU: *Ah, so that was one of the impetuses for it!*

ROY: That's probably so. Oh, no no, the story was already plotted.

LOU: *Also, of course, there was the Grandmaster trilogy where you brought back Kang and created the Grandmaster and originated the pre-Invaders. I might describe it as. That was the first time somebody brought back Cap, Subby and the Torch en mass so to speak.*

ROY: Yeah. I always had an interest . . . not so much in World War II but in the characters that I had grown up reading in the period *after* World War II. Despite of my love for the new characters, I really loved the old characters and the mix of them so very much, so it was a lot of fun to bring those characters back. And of course then there was the Squadron Sinister as the model for the Squadron Supreme, whose costumes I basically designed for **Sal Buscema.**

LOU: *And that was basically a rip-off of the Justice League.*

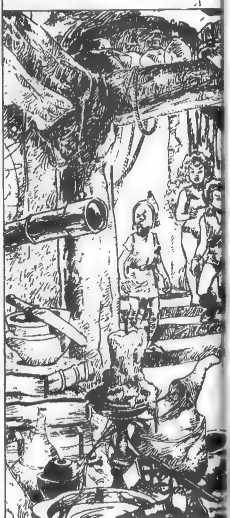
ROY: Well, no, I don't think it was a rip-off at all, I think it was an homage.

LOU: *Well, send-up I might say.*

ROY: I know what you're saying, it is a problem when you start using them a *lot*, they weren't intended to be used as much as they later were. But at the same time then I went on to do the Squadron Supreme. I enjoyed the parallel worlds stories, obviously, from the very first issue in 1963 when the JLA met the JSA, and other science-fiction stories *before* that. I thought it would be fun to bring a little bit of that to Marvel. Stan himself didn't like that kind of thing that much, but at that stage I was able to do the great majority of what I wanted as long as the stories looked good and they were engrossed in action.

Stan wasn't that much on bringing back characters just for the sake of bringing them back, the only time when he did anything like that — and it really *surprised* me — was when he brought back the original Human Torch, who I *never* thought we'd see again. That startled me because that was *his* idea. People have often assumed I pushed him into it, I've seen that written a couple of times, but it's not true at all. He just announced one day he was going to do it, it was as much of a shock to me as it was to anyone.

LOU: *And then he brought him back for one issue and killed him, and then brought him back a couple of more times and killed*



old Vision. Stan insisted it be an android."

him off a couple of more times.

ROY: Yeah.

LOU: *And then you ended up creating the Vision, and of course the impetus for that was the original Vision that Simon and Kirby created.*

ROY: Yeah. The strange thing about the Vision is even though it grew out of the **Simon and Kirby** thing, except for the name it's almost *totally* my creation. The costume looks a little bit like **Jack Kirby's** old costume, but not much. The basic thing was very simple. I wanted to do something very much like the old Vision. I wasn't going to bring *back* the old Vision, I was going to create a new character *called* the Vision, and he would have been very much like the old one, or at least coming out of another dimension; what I had in mind vaguely was a sort of mystic Martian Manhunter type of character. Stan, however, insisted that whatever character I do at that time, whether it was called the Vision or anything else, he *insisted* it be an android. So I sort of merged the two and made the Vision an android.

Then we had trouble because I started thinking about the colors of the face. You know, we had blue-skinned Atlanteans, we had a green Hulk, so I made the face red. Stan was very unhappy with that, he said, "Nobody's going to like a character with a bright red face, it looks silly, it looks like a *clown!*" And I said, "Well, **Martin Goodman** told you nobody'd buy a comic book called SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS, or *anything* about a character called Spider-Man because people hate spiders." You know, you never know. As it turned out, of course, the Vision was popular enough that had we really wanted to I think that we could have probably made a series about him. But he always seemed to function so well in AVENGERS that I had no great desire to take him out of there.

LOU: *Yeah, he almost was like their booster cable or something like that.*

ROY: Yeah. It made the book work at the time. Those early issue from #57 that introduced the Vision and after that became, I think immodestly, the classic issues of the Vision. I'm glad that I got to do those because it wasn't too long after that that under the influence of working with Stan on SILVER SURFER John changed his style somewhat and became, while still a wonderful artist, a more of a **Kirby** clone as opposed to the more original artist that he had been before.

LOU: *I remember seeing some of his work on NATURE BOY way back when, I was*

John Buscema's pencils from Marvel's WEIRDWORLD.

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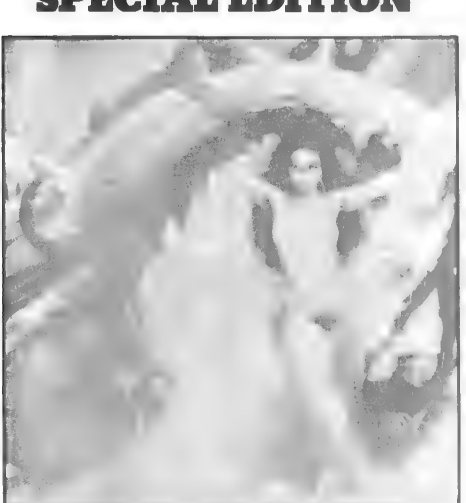

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"I always liked continuity, then as now."

stunned that this was really John Buscema.

ROY: And HELEN OF TROY, the adaptation of the movie, and of course those early issues of AVENGERS. It was really with his reaction to the criticisms of Stan with regard to SILVER SURFER –4, the Thor issue, that made John decide that what Stan wanted was a **Kirby** clone, and he worked hard and became one. And I think that SILVER SURFER and other work that he did became, while still wonderful, a little less original because of it. I think in some ways that was why the CONAN stuff was so nice, because there was a chance to get further away from the **Kirby** thing because there wasn't any **Kirby** sword and sorcery model — **Kirby** never worked on CONAN in his life except for this one cover of a book once, in which **John Romita** still redrew the head. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *As long as we're still talking about AVENGERS here, tell me something about the working of the great "Kree-Skrull War." Of course you created the conflict between the Skrulls and the Krees way back in CAPTAIN MARVEL #2.*

ROY: Just the usual accident. Some of the stuff may've come out of when I succeeded Stan on CAPTAIN MARVEL after one issue. Stan didn't want to do a character called Captain Marvel, **Martin Goodman** forced him to, so Stan abandoned it after one issue and I inherited it and that got me interested in the Kree. And we were in the process then of tying things together, and I always liked continuity, then as now, and it *bothered* me that we had these races, the Kree and the Skrull in particular, that kept popping up — we could have brought in others but those were the two main ones. I thought we should bring them together, so I started leading *towards* that in the issues that **Sal Buscema** was drawing of AVENGERS, with Captain Marvel and the whole thing.

The storyline would have been pretty similar anyway but something else happen, which is why the stories get reprinted and why they work out so much better — with no insult to Sal, he's a fine artist that I like to work with very much — but at that time suddenly **Neal Adams** came wandering in; this was after our stint on X-MEN, that was the first time we worked together. So he came to AVENGERS, did a cover for the preceding issue, and as a result those concepts I had just took off. Neal was much more involved creatively in the story and wanting to do his own kind of thing than Sal was — Sal drew what you gave him and did a fine job of it. Neal wanted to keep *adding* things. Well, first of all there was a personal contact which I didn't have with Sal or with John or with some other artists, and I think personal contact is great when you have it — I sort of miss it now being out here, I don't have that much of it anymore.

I remember Neal and I were walking, about to cross Second Avenue or something, just walking around talking about ideas, when I mentioned to him the idea of the fourth Skrull, you know -- the fact that three of the Skrulls had turned into cows but one of them had not been accounted for, from FANTASTIC FOUR #2. And he really sparked to that, because I wanted to use it in the story. Then he added his own segment in one of the giant issues, it was entirely his own idea. He just called me and said, "Listen, I'd like to do this thing with the Vision" — the story was already plotted, the idea was the Vision would come in and collapse and

The only CONAN by Kirby (redrawn face by Romita Sr.).

"Stan didn't want to do Captain Marvel, Martin Good-

they'd bring him back and that kind of thing, and then go off and find the cows — and since the book had been made into a giant he said, "I'd like to put in a middle chapter in which the Ant Man goes into his brain." And we talked it over for maybe another few sentences, and I had a lot of faith in what Neal would do, and I had a reasonable amount of faith that if there were any problems I would be able to work them out when I dialogued the book, so I said, "Go with it!"

LOU: *And that was one of the classic AVENGERS sequences.*

ROY: And it was the start of the idea that the Vision was the Human Torch remodelled. Neal only had the Vision discover *something* sort of vaguely there, but that was his idea, and later on we kept on with that.

LOU: *And then Neal dropped out before the end.*

ROY: Well, we were always having deadline trouble. Neal always tended to be over-committed, things were getting later and later, and the day that the book supposedly was to be totally finished, or maybe it was even a day or so after that, he wandered in with three or four pages. I didn't even want to look at them. You know, it wasn't just my choice, but I had to give the whole thing to **John Buscema** who had to lay the story out in just a very few days. I would have loved to have seen Neal do it. *John* would have loved to have seen Neal do it because he didn't want to do it anyway, and it's really a shame; but it was entirely due to Neal's inability to understand the idea that a book has to be on sale every month and if he feels like taking five weeks to draw one then sooner or later it will catch up with him.

LOU: *And he was doing just about all of the covers that DC had back then, it seemed, and the GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW book.*

ROY: Yeah, he was over-committed. You know, it happens to everybody somewhat, but Neal just somehow could never understand that you couldn't make the schedule work for him. You know, except

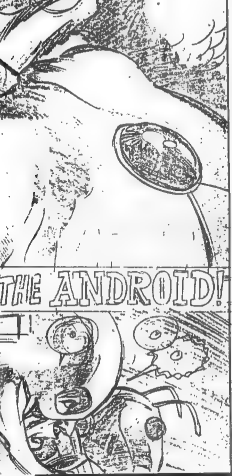
Original pencils from Neal Adams' 1st AVENGERS (#93), a double-pager.

man forced him, so Stan abandoned it after one issue."

for those four pages the whole idea was that I would get two more every day or something, and I might have done it but I had no faith in it, I'd been down that road before. Eventually **Tom Palmer** would no longer ink Neal because he said he'd spent his last night staying up all night to do the pages. I often would get pages and after coming home would have to sit up most of the night writing them because they were due the next day, and that was really wearing on me, too. But the results were nice.

LOU: *Yeah.*

ROY: When you look back on it later you forget the pain and just remember the accomplishment. By the way, those issues



didn't sell especially better than Sal's, but they were certainly more memorable in other ways.

LOU: *Yeah, everybody remembers those.*

ROY: Right.

LOU: *Well, another series that you were famous for way back when, one that I certainly liked, was DOCTOR STRANGE, especially the Colan-Palmer issues. What was it like working on STRANGE?*

ROY: Well, it was strange. I started off with **Dan Adkins** of course, and **Dan Adkins** dropped off and recommended **Tom Palmer** as penciller, and that only worked out so-so. Then the next issue we had **Gene Colan.** I thought that would kind of interesting, I liked **Colan's** work tremendously as **Adam Austin,** but they stuck me with **Tom Palmer** as inker. I said, "Jesus, I don't know if this guy can ink, we've never seen *any* of his inking." And of course it turned out to be really a wonderful combination, probably some of the best looking work that was ever done by Gene with anybody. I think DOCTOR STRANGE was even better than DRACULA, but that's just a personal opinion. I think it was some of the best work coming out of Marvel at the time, and it sold even more poorly than **Jim Steranko's** S.H.I.E.L.D., which was some of the other best work coming out of Marvel at the time. Those were the two bottom books, they were selling in the low 40 percentile of a 400,000 monthly print run; if they had figures like that nowadays at most companies they'd be quite happy, but of course you're talking about 15 to 20 cent books. But it was a wonderful experience.

Gene's version of Doctor Strange was so *different* from **Ditko's** or etc. that I had to write *to* that. Gene's idea of other dimensions was mostly a lot of smoke, and he had these strange panel layouts, and I think the unclear storytelling — which sometimes just got a little bit too far afield for me to bring back together with the placement of word balloons — probably made that slight difference in sales that might have led to its cancellation even at the same time that it was presenting wonderful classic pages.

LOU: *And how about something about everybody's favorite amphibian, the Sub-Mariner.*

ROY: Well, he was certainly mine, although I like Aquaman. The Sub-Mariner was a favorite of mine from the non-glory days of the late '40s when he was a relatively nondescript character compared to what he had been and was to become. The stuff in the '50s *really* knocked me out, even though I didn't

Adams & Palmer (AVENGERS #93).

know **Bill Everett's** name then, I couldn't read his signature. The Sub-Mariner, I called him the Sub-Mareener — *(Laughter.)* Like so many people I didn't know how to pronounce the word, and also in World War II the word was pronounced submareener, which was a common term then. It was Bill who wanted to pronounce it Sub-Mariner after "The Ancient Mariner."

LOU: *I've got one of the Marvel records where they had actors sit around and read AVENGERS #4, and in this thing they're all going around saying, "And that's Prince Namor, the Sub-Mareener."*

ROY: Right, well it was a common thing, although it used to grate Bill a little bit. He put that hyphen in there I think in order to try to clarify it, but he came out of a time when people had heard the word submariner a lot more. I didn't even know it was otherwise a word when I started getting into the character, I loved his look, I loved the whole underwater feeling, and the stories in the '50s I felt had a wonderful wonderful flavor, which of course is why I worked so hard to do SAGA OF THE SUB-MARINER, the twelve-issue

"That era was so heavily influenced by Stan and

Roy Thomas, Gene Colan and Tom Palmer (DR. STRANGE) — NUFF SAID!!!

series.

I don't know what there is to tell about SUB-MARINER except that I got a double dose of old stories and various things by the fact that off and on during the late '60s, before I was married, **Bill Everett** lived with me in several different locations, first in Greenwich Village and then later on the Upper East Side. I heard a lot of stories about the character. But Bill was always self-deprecating about the importance of the character. He would tell little anecdotes but he wasn't interested in *philosophizing* about the Sub-Mariner. At the same time I could tell that he *had* identified with the character at one time, and that he was still kind of proud of it. But he never could quite relate to what Stan wanted to do with it, he *hated* the Imperius Rex thing — I wasn't too wild about that aspect myself — and he hated the fact that they had become Atlanteans, which had never been a part of his original storyline. But at the same time, you know, here was the Sub-Mariner back, so therefore Bill was going to first draw it with Stan and then later with me and with other people, and of course that was the last strip he worked on, really, before he died in the early '70s

I liked the Sub-Mariner quite a bit myself and I managed to relate more to what Stan was doing, even though it wasn't exactly what I would have done with the character. I know I'd love to get a chance to play around with the character again, I think maybe I'd feel more freedom now than I did in that era, which was so heavily influenced by Stan and by Jack — Stan in terms of writing in particular — that it created its own inhibiting factor. I think that nowadays you might be able to take some of the areas of the strip off in different directions and do something different with it, and in some ways I feel that there are things that Bill set in motion that you could go back to that would be just as good nowadays as then. But I don't want to go into them because why give somebody else an idea.

LOU: *Yeah, right.* (Laughter.) *Okay, let's try and get on... you know at Marvel I can hardly think of one series that originated in the '60s that you didn't script at one time or another. What was it like taking over FANTASTIC FOUR after Jack and Stan had left?*

ROY: You know, I don't remember *that* nearly as well as taking over SPIDER-MAN. I did like *doing* FANTASTIC FOUR, it was a favorite strip of mine, but I never really warmed to SPIDER-MAN as much because Spider-Man was a nice character but it was nothing I ever desired to write. But FANTASTIC FOUR because of the **Jack Kirby** connection, the fact that it was a group, the fact that *I loved*

Dr. Strange by Palmer (pencils) & Dan Adkins (inks).

Jack that it created its own inhibiting factor."

the Thing as a character from the word go, was certainly a favorite of mine. And yet at the same time whenever I was writing it I never . . . I don't even remember, except for the fact that the first issue I wrote was the one with the Black Panther and a kind of pseudo South Africa kind of thing, and that was a one-shot. When I came back and actually became the regular writer, I don't even know what the first story I wrote was. I would in most other strips, for example I know all *four* of the stories I wrote with **Gil Kane** as the first SPIDER-MAN writer after Stan.

Spider-Man wasn't a character I was that interested in doing but I liked the idea of working with Gil, we had had a lot of fun on CAPTAIN MARVEL earlier, we meshed very well together — and we're working together again now on some things for DC. We had this assignment to do the first vampire story, because the Code had just been changed so we could do vampire and werewolf stories. Stan wanted us to make up a vampire character that was not Dracula, so we made up more of a science-fiction vampire character in Morbius, and then we went on to do the Savage Land story because we were both such KING KONG fans, and we had a lot of fun with that

LOU: *And that was probably the most atypical SPIDER-MAN story of all.* (Laughter.)

ROY: We were *hoping* for it to be, it was intended to be. Unfortunately I was stuck in the first issue or two with a four-armed Spider-Man

LOU: *Oh, yes!* (Laughter)

ROY: Or was it six, I forget

LOU: *Four extras*

ROY: Yeah, that sort of made it an atypical issue. *(Laughter.)* Plus of course Gil's work was atypical anyway. I think the more we worked on it the further it would have gotten away from Stan's vision, where guys like **Gerry Conway** and **Len Wein** were closer to the kind of continuation that Stan would have wanted for the strip I must say, though, those issues, because it was the first vampire story perhaps, sold very well; and I'm proud to say, despite my admiration for Stan, the sales actually dropped a little when he came back. *(Laughter.)* But I think that was a temporary phenomenon. The sales went up when **Jack Kirby** left too, but sometimes that was a temporary phenomenon

LOU: *Well, we're almost to the end of this tape but I'm not going to get out of here before I ask you about THE INVADERS, which was one of my faves of the '70s. What can you tell me about that one?*

ROY: Well, I came to my World War II obsession, if that's what you want to call it, rather late. In the late '60s I was living just about a block from a theater where TORA TORA TORA was playing and I didn't even bother to make it up the street to see the movie. I was always *somewhat* interested in the period, and I loved Stan's CAPTAIN AMERICA stories in that period, but somewhere along the line I really wanted to get back and do those characters, the Torch, Sub-Mariner and Captain America. I had tried, in fact, to do the All-Winners Squad, which was set after the War, and I *still* think that with that or another name it's a viable concept.

LOU: *I know, it's a terrible name but it's a viable concept*

ROY: Yeah, and even the name, you know, what the heck, lots of names aren't that good anyway; they were just called the All-Winners Squad because the book was called ALL-WINNERS COMICS, and you could change the name certainly. But those two stories which I read later were nice, and I wanted to do something like that but I knew Stan wouldn't let me set something in *that* period even though it would be very interesting to have something set in the post War era; in fact I'd like to do that now with the first panel of the first book being the atomic bomb exploding, which is about my *only* memory of World War II, seeing that in

Bill Everett (circa 1940). The creator of Sub-Mariner.

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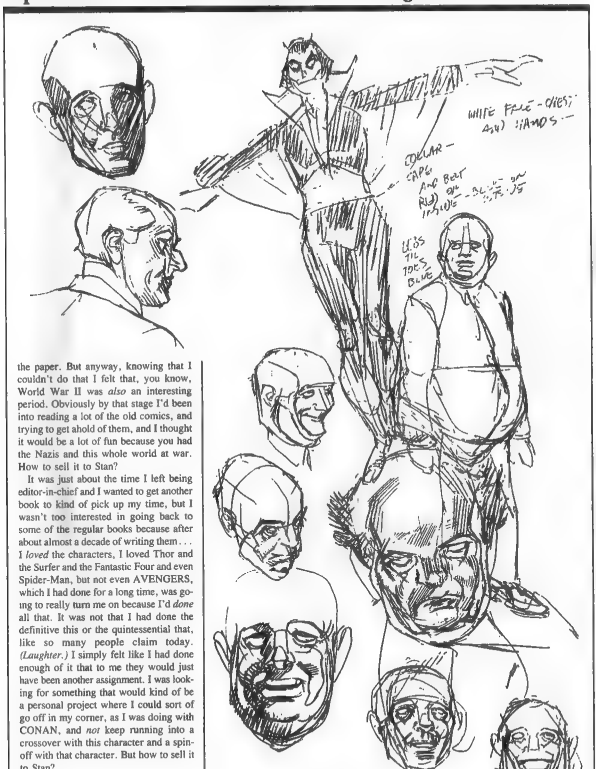
"Spider-Man was a nice character but nothing I desired to write."



the paper. But anyway, knowing that I couldn't do that I felt that, you know, World War II was *also* an interesting period. Obviously by that stage I'd been into reading a lot of the old comics, and trying to get ahold of them, and I thought it would be a lot of fun because you had the Nazis and this whole world at war. How to sell it to Stan?

It was just about the time I left being editor-in-chief and I wanted to get another book to kind of pick up my time, but I wasn't too interested in going back to some of the regular books because after about almost a decade of writing them . . . I *loved* the characters, I loved Thor and the Surfer and the Fantastic Four and even Spider-Man, but not even AVENGERS, which I had done for a long time, was going to really turn me on because I'd *done* all that. It was not that I had done the definitive this or the quintessential that, like so many people claim today. *(Laughter.)* I simply felt like I had done enough of it that to me they would just have been another assignment. I was looking for something that would kind of be a personal project where I could sort of go off in my corner, as I was doing with CONAN, and *not* keep running into a crossover with this character and a spin-off with that character. But how to sell it to Stan?

And then I remembered, there had been a period about two or three or four years earlier where Stan had wanted to team up the Sub-Mariner and the Hulk on a regular

A rare moment: The creation of a character "MORBIUS" from the sketch book of Gilbert Kane. Co-created by Roy.

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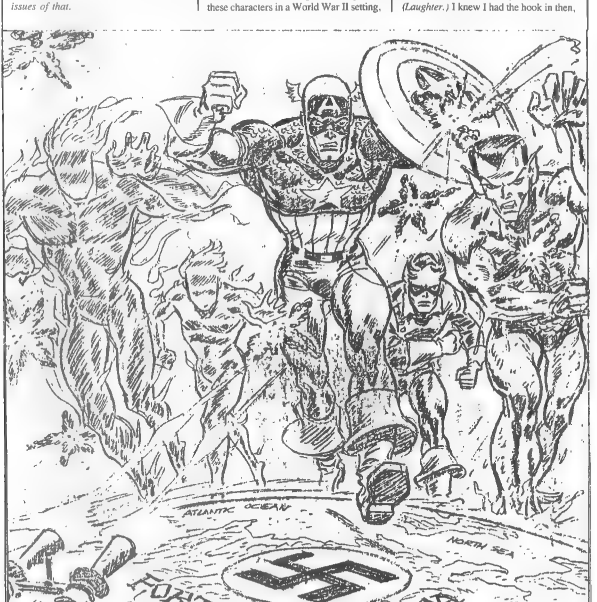
"Stan didn't like anybody but himself to write the Surfer."

basis and call them the Invaders, but it was a little too close after the TV show called INVADERS so he didn't do it — and eventually, of course, that concept came back with some cast additions as THE DEFENDERS.

LOU: *Right, and you did the first two issues of that.*

ROY: Yeah. I originated it in SUB-MARINER to some extent but then Stan wouldn't let me use the Silver Surfer so we substituted Doctor Strange. Stan didn't like anybody but himself to write the Surfer, and still doesn't obviously. *(Laughter.)* But anyway, so I went and said, "Here's the thing, we bring back these characters in a World War II setting, because with Captain America and the Sub-Mariner and the Torch you've got three *good* characters, and you can have a group book that doesn't run into all of the other group books and doesn't just duplicate AVENGERS or this or that, and you've got a *great* title — THE IN-VADERS!" And Stan says, "I *love* it!" *(Laughter.)* I knew I had the hook in then,



Frank Robbins' pencil "splash" from THE INVADERS #1 (story/creation by Roy Thomas).

"The historical novel is about as viable a form as any other."

you know.

Unfortunately I think that while **Frank Robbins** was a good artist and he did wonderful period work, he really wasn't the kind of superhero artist that the kids liked. **Steve Englehart** certainly managed to sell some copies of CAPTAIN AMERICA with him, but I think trying to sell a World War II book on top of that was just a little bit too much. The book did pretty well when **Vinnie Colletta** was inking it and changing it more, but then when **Frank Springer** came in and inked it more like **Robbins** the sales dropped right away. I probably should have insisted on more changes and so forth. But at any rate it still lasted forty-some issues, not a bad run. I think that any time that they wanted to with the name INVADERS or some other name, I always preferred the Liberty Legion — I had made that up actually when I was 12 or 13, long before even the Starstudded Comics people did — the book could be a hit. At the time the combination of circumstances was just kind of against it.

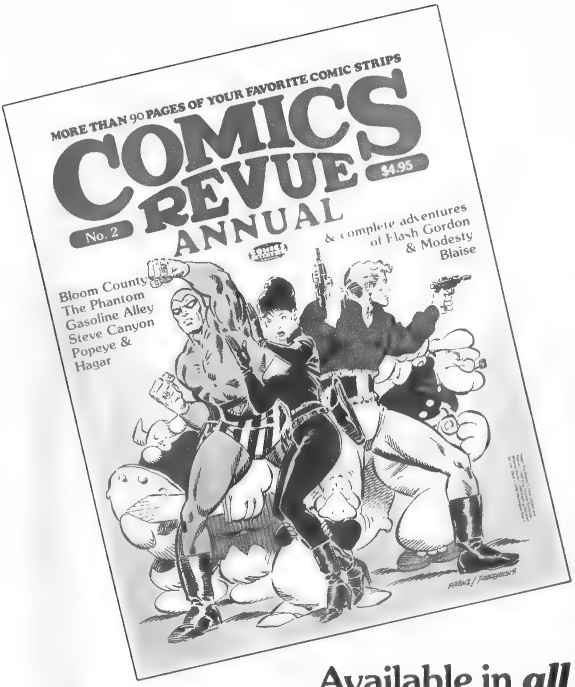
And unfortunately my doing that and then sticking with ALL-STAR SQUADRON and then YOUNG ALL-STARS has made a lot of people think that that's *all* that I want to write. Actually what it really amounts to is I just like to do one book or so that way, SECRET ORIGINS I guess is a second if you want to look at it that way. I sort of like doing a certain portion of my work in one period or another, but I like to spread it out. I can't take seriously a medium in which stories almost all have to be set in the present or the future, it seems ridiculous to me. The historical novel is about as viable a form of expression as any other, it's just unfortunate that the American public doesn't really care much for history.

LOU: *Yes, that is unfortunate, and history also has the advantage of having a background you can research.*

ROY: Well, yeah, research, I don't even want to *count* the number of books I've got, paperback and hardbound, at least hundreds of them, all of which touch on some area of World War II, and yet I feel I know very very little about it. You could ask me a question in one area and I could rattle off a lot of facts, but ask me another question about something else and I would know absolutely nothing, but I could probably look it up. *(Laughter.)*

--AND THE SECOND OF WHICH WILL EFFECTIVELY SMURCH ANY HOLOCAUST THAT SAME LITTLE BUTTON MIGHT HAVE TRIGGERED-OFF!
NICE TEAMWORK, SUB-MARINER! LOOKS TO ME LIKE THE DRAGON-LORD PLANNED TO BLOW US ALL TO BITS--ME INCLUDED! AND HE AND I EVEN HAD A CONTRACT!
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK OUR TWO-FACED FRIEND WAS ONLY USING ME!

One of Everett's last jobs (Sub-Mariner, his creation).



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"I didn't really expect to get offered JLI."

TY TEMPLETON

Ty inks the pencils of Keith Giffen (J.L.I. #21).

All artwork accompanying this interview is © 1989 DC Comic, Inc., unless otherwise noted.

"I'm having more fun than I thought I would."

Ty Templeton freely admits that he is drawing JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL for the money and the recognition — and because it's fun! *It's 10:12, time for Brunch Break. But who exactly is Ty Templeton, and how the heck did he end up on JLI? Today we're starring something new that we hope you'll really enjoy. More important, in this soap opera we call comicdom, do the good and kind people in pleasant DC valley know what's lurking in their midst? But first these important words . . .*

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Hey, for some strange reason I'm picking up a radio station when I start my tape recorder.*

TY TEMPLETON: All of the electronics in this house pick up the local radio station, too, and unfortunately it's like the music of your life station.

PAT: *Well, I was concerned that it might be overriding our conversation but I just played the tape back and it seems to be okay.*

TY: So if at some point in this interview I say "These boots are made for walking" we know it's not me. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *I'll keep that in mind.*

TY: Just for fun I'm going to say "These boots are made for walking" repeatedly now. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *So, let's take this very naturally —*

TY: Okay.

PAT: *When you were offered the opportunity to do JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL what was your first reaction?*

TY: Actually — very very *first* reaction?

PAT: *Yeah.*

TY: Surprise. I'd heard that it was one of DC's two or three bestselling titles, and I didn't really expect to get offered that at this point in the game. I kind of assumed that they like to throw big weight around on big selling titles, and I certainly don't consider myself a big weight yet, so it was mostly surprise.

PAT: *What's your reaction been to doing it now for several months?*

TY: Well . . . *hyee*, how to word this and be as honest as possible and as nice as possible — superhero books aren't my life. For working at DC and doing a superhero book I'm really pleased to be doing it, and I'm having more fun than I thought I would. I went through a couple of moments in the first few issues where I would like break pencils and say that's it, because I don't *like* drawing superhero books as much as I like drawing the sort of stuff I *used* to do. But it's less a chore than it used to be. It really started out that I was doing it because I wanted the ex-

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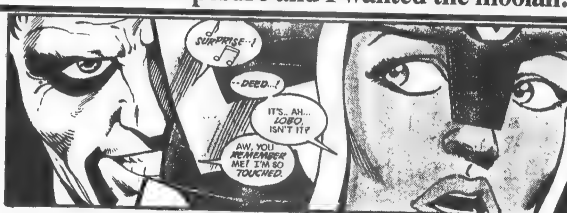
UH-OH. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS...THE DIRECTORS SNICK HE GOT OUT OF THE DUNGEON.
HE'S GOING TO BE MIGHTY PISSED AT US.

STIG'S INFERNO by Ty.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Ty Templeton
Born: Toronto, 25 years ago
Occupation: Artist
Credits: I wrote, drew, pencilled, lettered, inked, boxed and hand delivered STIG'S INFERNO to people, which stopped because I couldn't work for the Antichrist anymore. *(Laughter.)* And I wrote a couple of books when I was working at Vortex, the creature that walks like a comics company, and colored an issue of MR. X — *yea!* Then I went over to Eclipse and inked NEW WAVE, which sold in the tens. *(Laughter.)* I did some more STIG'S INFERNO work while I was there, and about once a year I do a story for CRITTERS. I've sort of been hanging around DC for the last two years. I did a SUPERMAN, that was a big thrill.
Art Education: I went to art college for two years and skipped a lot of classes. I met a lot of nice people but learned squat there. Art college wants to turn you into a commercial illustrator, I didn't want to be one — so when I quit school I hooked up with a commercial illustrator and worked in his studio. *(Laughter.)* I spent one term at an art school that wanted to turn everybody into fine artists, which I found equally obnoxious. I thought the whole point was to allow you to control your own art.
Favorite Experience At Art School: I had a teacher tell me that I should stop trying to be a cartoonist because "there's no money in it," like this was the main driving force.
Comics Training: Self Training Mostly. I read a lot of comics when I was a kid and went, "Gee, I wish I could do this," and sat up nights drawing.
Art Influences Other Than Comics: Everything Under the Sun. Your art really is an expression of yourself. I mean it's more craft than art at this point of the game, but everything in life is an influence.
Favorite Art Style: I have a real fondness for Art Deco.
Favorite Superhero Comic: BATMAN ANNUAL #3, because it's got Bat-Mite and Ace the Bathound

"I wanted the exposure and I wanted the moolah."



Ty's favorite character, BIG BARDA.

posure and I wanted the moolah, but it's turning out to be not too bad. The issue I'm working on right now is actually getting to be quite fun.

The other thing I wanted to mention was when I first started doing it, before I got any of the pages, I was *concerned* about having to work from the real rough breakdowns that **Keith Giffen** does. But it turns out that he's pretty good at that, and I don't really have too much of a problem with the way he breaks down a page. I was worried about that and it turns out that that's pretty good, too.

PAT: *That was one of the things I wanted to ask you about. For working in a genre that you're unfamiliar with —*

TY: Well, there's no way that you could say I'm unfamiliar with superhero comics, I've got 15,000 of 'em in the basement! *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *I mean in terms of drawing them, if you will.*

TY: Well, I don't come at it with an unfamiliarity that's . . . I come at it with less *enthusiasm*, because I really enjoy drawing funny ha-ha satire books more than I enjoy drawing big muscular guys with thyroid problems. *(Laughter.)* But I certainly love *reading* superhero comic books, it's just not where my head is at as for what I want to do. Like I love listening to rock 'n' roll but I prefer playing blues.

PAT: *I take your point. Did you find after a while that working with Keith's plots and layouts made the job simpler?*

TY: Yeah. Sometimes you kind of curse him, you go, "Oh, gosh, I'd do this differently," and then you call up Andy and ask if you can, and Andy's real cool and says you can. But on the mornings when you get up and say, "Gosh, I have no idea what to do," there you've got Keith giving you big broad suggestions and that's a good jumping off point. You've got this piece of paper that says START HERE, it's a tremendous help that way. And it's not as artistically limiting as you would think because, as I said, Andy allows me to just jump all over the page however I want to.

PAT: *The toughest thing to do in many ways is the storytelling, and in this case if you are stuck on the storytelling then you've got it sitting in front of you.*

TY: Well the truth of the matter is I don't find storytelling hard to do, I rather *enjoy* doing it — and Keith does it *very* well! He really does. We have a similar sense of storytelling, and his pacing is quite good. That's his job on the book really, pacing, so that's what he thinks about. At first I was thinking, "I'm going to show these guys, I'm going to fix all of the storytelling errors," and so on, and then I got the first issue and looked at it and said, "There's really nothing wrong with this!" Every now and then just to prove that I'm alive and that I'm a creative person, I will just rearrange one of his pages. I might have an idea that's different, but

"Jack Kirby's still underrated somehow."

the point is should I change Keith's stuff -- more often than not I don't *have* to, it's pretty good on its own. And I don't really mind doing that because, as I said, since superheroes books aren't my life, my start and my end, this is more like a job than my Arte with a capital A and an e on the end. So I don't really mind working with him rather than against him.

PAT: *For somebody for whom superheroes aren't the be all and end all, as you said, you've certainly started out on a book that has lots of them.*

TY: Yeah, but I'm not "starting out" here, Pat.

PAT: *Starting out doing superheroes.*

TY: I'm not even starting out doing superheroes, I did BOOSTER GOLD.

PAT: *Oh, that's right.*

TY: I've been with superheroes for a while, and I do *like* them. I have more copies of BATMAN and SUPERMAN comics than can fill a room, as my fiance will tell me. *(Laughter.)* "We need the basement back, I can't wash my clothes without having to step over all of your SPIDER-MAN comics." I love superhero comics, they're trapped in my brain here, but for the most part I tend to like drawing your **Harvey Kurtzman** style stories. But thanks for employing me, Andy. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Have you ever asked Andy or Keith or anybody there why they went to you when they needed a replacement for Kevin?*

TY: No, not really. I kind of became the replacement in stages. First I was just asked to do a fill-in issue, then it became two fill-in issues, and then a few more fill-in issues, and then it became Kevin and I would alternate, and then it became I would do it permanently. Over the space of about a month and a half every time I talked to them I seemed to become more and more permanent on the book. At no point did I stop and go, "Hey, fellas, why me?" I figured if I was good enough to do fill-in issues and they liked it, then it would be okay to do it permanently.

PAT: *Is there any one character of the JLI that you have the most fun with as an artist?*

TY: Big Barda, mostly because I think **Jack Kirby** is... it's hard to say underrated because everybody loves him, but he's still underrated somehow. Working with his characters... I was just drawing Big Barda and realized how unbelievably *beautiful* the design for that costume is. You can make that figure a quarter of an inch tall and *still*, just by virtue of the way he designed that costume, it's a beautiful piece of graphics. I don't think **Kirby** sat around thinking out all the angles, but he has such an intuitive mind to do it well that it's just a hoot. The first two issues I did all took place on Apokolips, and that was the most fun I ever had with my clothes on.

PAT: *What's the toughest thing about doing a book like JLI?*

BIG BARDA pencils by Jack Kirby.

"I'm jealous as hell of Paul Chadwick!"

TY: Getting started in the morning. *(Laughter.)* Once I get started I enjoy it, you know, because I do get into it, the challenges of how do I make this drawing work and blah blah blah. Just getting started in the morning is the toughest part.

PAT: *Let's back up and do a little background on who Ty Templeton is, where he comes from, etc. etc. Since you did a lot of your early work with the independents or the alternatives or whatever name you choose for the people who aren't DC and Marvel —*

TY: We're in print so I won't give the word we used. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *What's your impression of that segment of the industry as a whole?*

TY: I love it, I wish it would get more support than it does. You just look at books like LOVE AND ROCKETS and CONCRETE and you just hope to God that these people can continue to make a good living at it, that they don't have to sell out like I did and start working for a superhero book. I wish I was still in it, to be completely frank, because there you have more freedom. You know, you give something to a publisher and he says thank you, he doesn't ask you to take this panel out or fix this drawing. I really don't have a problem with it when an editor at DC says fix the drawing because I understand that that's what I was hired to do, but it's a much more *fun* experience to take a blank piece of paper and completely create something — I consider *that* Arte with a capital A and an e at the end.

PAT: *On the other hand, though, do you think the independents would become more professional if the editorial process were a little more stringent?*

TY: Who wants them to be more professional? I think what makes the indies *so* fascinating is that *it is* the pure expression of the cartoonists, rather than the pure expression of the cartoonist and the editor and the publisher and the distributor. A committee doesn't do anything worth looking at — with the exception of DC, thank you. When one guy sits down and does a piece of work, whether you like it or you don't like it you have to *respect* what it is. Most of my reading at the moment — except for superhero comics which I read just because you need something to fill your mind with pabulum — but I love to read the indies to see what people are doing. I love CONCRETE and YUMMY FUR and those things, they're unique and stand by themselves.

PAT: *Do you miss the chance to write?*

TY: No, because I get to every now and then. I just wrote a story for SECRET ORIGINS that my editor was kind enough to really leave me alone on, and I got to draw it, too. And I've got a standing offer from CRITTERS to write and draw a story for them anytime I've got the time. I do write, it's just a question of do I get a chance to see it get into print! *(Laughter.)* I've got nine stories backlogged on me now. Plus I've got an offer from a *men's magazine* to write a strip for them in partnership with a friend of mine, and in the back of my mind I'm writing that when I'm working. So I write all the time.

PAT: *You talked about selling out, do you see working at DC to be simply a way to build up a name and an image and the money to be able to afford to go back to the independents and maybe be a bigger success at it?*

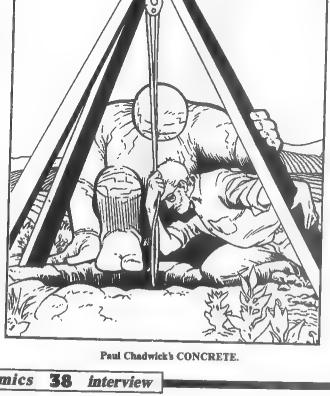
TY: I couldn't have put it better myself. *(Laughter.)* You thought you were going to trick me into revealing something!

PAT: *No, not really.*

TY: But that's completely true, I make no bones about it. I really do like, as I said, reading superhero comics, and it's kind of *fun* to be involved in them — I get to draw Batman! — but my heart and soul will always be in stuff that I write and draw myself. I feel uncomfortable writing characters that I don't own, because I want to do things that I can't do, so I'm really looking forward to being able to jump both feet into the indies again when I've got a little bit more of a name so people will actually read what I do. I'm jealous as hell of **Paul Chadwick,** just jealous as hell! CONCRETE sells what, about six million copies now — that's disgusting! *(Laughter.)* If I could have somehow managed to put out a book that sold that good then I wouldn't have had to do this work in the superhero genre.

PAT: *If you had the power tomorrow to redo the comic-book industry in your image, is there anything that you would change?*

TY: Yeah, I'd bring back the Flying Batcave. *(Laughter.)* That's a tongue-in-cheek answer, but I kind of mean it. My favorite superhero comics are the ones from the '50s and '60s, I really get a charge out of the Flying Batcave and Bat-Mite and Mr. Mxyzptlk and Red Kryptonite and Lois snooping out Clark's identity. There doesn't seem to be room for that today, nobody seems to want to produce new comics that way, or even go back and redo old ones. I don't see what's *wrong* with



© 1989 Paul Chadwick

Paul Chadwick's CONCRETE.

"I'm going to fix all of the storytelling errors."

these great stories — they were great stories for people in the '50s and '60s, why aren't they great stories for people now? If I could redo the comics industry then I would put out a line of comics that are entertaining for the whole family, as opposed to just 15-year-old adolescent power fantasies.

PAT: *Do you think that maybe the problem is that children today are "older" in a sense than children were back then?*

TY: If that's the case then what is it about *me* that I still find the stories entertaining? Everyone says you can't put out stories like that because television and blah blah blah is too competitive with comic books, you can't afford to aim a story at an eight-year-old. But I'm 25 and I still enjoy these stories, and not just from a nostalgic point of view because I wasn't alive in the '50s. I enjoy them because I enjoy them, they're *fun* stories! When I'm sick with the flu there's nothing better in the world than to have a cat curled up on my feet and a BATMAN ANNUAL to read. I can't believe that I'm this thoroughly unique creature that's the only one left alive that enjoys this type of stuff, there's *got* to be a market for them out there!

The other thing I'd change is I'd fire everybody who can't draw. *(Laughter.)* I really feel that there's way too many people pencilling books who just can't draw. I'm not out to dump on Marvel, but they've got mainstream books over at Marvel, characters that have been around for 25 years, that are being drawn by people that don't remember how many fingers there are on a hand sometimes, and I think that's a shame.

PAT: *And I'd fire everybody that can't write, so between us we'd probably cripple the American and Canadian unemployment figures.*

TY: A big part of comics writing, especially over at Marvel because of the way they *do* stories over there, is the ability to pace and tell the story, and you've got people who not only can't draw but can't pace a story. But you can have the worst writer in the world and a great artist and you still can enjoy the comic, but if you have the greatest writer and a really *crappy* artist you'll enjoy the comic less.

PAT: *That is true, bad writing can be saved by terrific art, but it's not necessarily true that terrific writing can save bad art. I guess it's because when the browsing reader goes to the stand and starts flipping through trying to decide whether he's going to buy that book, it's the art that draws him to it.*

TY: This is true, but it's not just browsing when you're there. I buy a lot of comics just because I do, and I've got a box of comics that I haven't gotten around to reading yet, and there's about 20 or 30 in the back that have just been there for a year that I *can't* get around to reading simply because — I take a run at it sometimes — I just get stopped cold by really crummy art or really crummy writing. I imagine that's been constant in the industry since the '40s, but I just don't seem to remember comics being *that* amateurish, that *bad*, in the '60s.

PAT: *Do you think it's the influx of people like you and I, people who start out as fans and never bothered to learn the ropes outside of comics?*

TY: It's nice to know that you think we've never learned the ropes, Dan.

© 1989 Vortex Comics Inc.

Ty Templeton on STIG'S INFERNO (from Vortex Comics).

PAT: *No, it's not that* we've *never learned the ropes, I mean there are people who I think have not.*

TY: I know. The really great old comics were done by people who didn't know what a comic book was when they were 15, they had to bring something else to it. I always wanted to be an illustrator, I didn't always want to be a cartoonist when I was a kid — I wanted to illustrate books. But a lot of people out there, yeah, they learned how to draw faces from **John Byrne,** end of story, they learned how to draw hands from **Gil Kane,** end of story. I agree, I think that there's too many people that don't go out and learn that there's a world outside of comic books.

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"I'd been interested in animation since I was a kid."

JIM

Photo. Mr Darb

BRADRICK

I met Jim one afternoon when he came into the Pegasus store looking for funny animal comics from the Golden Age. He bought the few we had that were really beat-up, explaining that he needed to study their technique for a comic strip he was preparing.

Shortly thereafter that same day, Mike Richardson called to tell me that a guy named Jim Bradrick would be coming to buy funny animal comics, and to be especially helpful to him as he was working on something for Dark Horse. Wow! Deja vu.

I don't know Jim all that well, having seen him less than a handful of times since then, but he has always seemed a quiet gentleman. He works most of the time, keeping himself busy with either comic work or animation. We'll let him take it from here...

ANDY MANGELS: *Now your background is not specifically comics, is that right, Jim?*

JIM BRADRICK: That's true, my main background has been in TV commercial animation.

ANDY: *Did you start out as a commer-*

All art accompanying this interview is TM & © 1988 by Dark Horse Comics, Inc., unless otherwise noted

"I'm trying to build a reputation as a steady worker

© 1998 Jim Bradrick

Nick, Asta, and Nora (from THE THIN MAN films) by Mr. Bradrick.

cial artist, did you jump into animation right off the bat?

JIM: Well, I'd been interested in animation since I was a kid in the Midwest, and had taught myself what I *could* out of books but had no opportunity to really use the skills there. When I moved to Portland I saw an opportunity to start a business doing animated TV commercials, and it worked out pretty well except that there isn't enough market here to sustain full-time animators.

ANDY: *And you worked at the animation studio with another comics artist, right?*

JIM: Actually I was partners with **Don Wallis** and **Randy Emberlin,** the well known inker for blah blah blah blah blah. *(Laughter.)*

with a lot of versatility. . . I don't want to be typed."

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Jim Bradrick
Born: 11 February 1946 — Pittsburg, Kansas
Residence: Portland, Oregoon
Education: 2 years Kansas City Art Institute
Credits: WACKY SQUIRREL, BORIS THE BEAR, INSANE! and numerous animated commercials
Favorite Cartoons: Early WOODY WOODPECKER, most Tex Avery cartoons, and a lot of Warner Bros. cartoons
Favorite Cartoon Characters: Woody Woodpecker, the Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote
Artistic Influences: Disney Studio artists, Mort Drucker, Mac Raboy CAPTAIN MARVEL JR., HOWARD THE DUCK (Gene Colan's)
Pet Peeve: People who spit in public
Favorite Films: THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, THE SEARCHERS, DR. STRANGELOVE, and WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?
Least Favorite Color: Brown
Favorite Sound Effect: "The coke bottle noise that the Roadrunner makes."
Favorite Funny Animal Gag: Metaphors for tumescence (e.g. the RED HOT RIDING HOOD cartoons)
Most Bizarre Accomplishment: Survived an armed robbery of a hotel

Jim's WACKY SQUIRREL takes a walk . . .

ANDY: *Marvel, DC, Dark Horse and everybody else.*
JIM: Right, just fill in the blank.
ANDY: *What kind of commercials did you do?*
JIM: We did everything from public service to educational to product animation. It was mostly character animation of one kind or another. We did *styles*, everything from old-time Hollywood to very modern sketchy line type work that's popular now.
ANDY: *Did you do any national commercials?*
JIM: No, only regional work. We did work for out of state but nothing that's been on network TV.
ANDY: *How did you get involved with Dark Horse?*
JIM: Well, **Randy Emberlin** had already got into the comic-book field and was doing MINDWALK for Dark Horse and had told me about them, so I was aware through that, and his longtime friendship with **Randy Stradley**, I went over to see about the possibility of doing some writing for Dark Horse and found out that they were looking for someone to do a funny animal character, so I showed them my stuff and got the job.
ANDY: *You got hired to do WACKY SQUIRREL.*
JIM: That's right, I designed the character and it took off from there, originally as backups in BORIS THE BEAR.
ANDY: *Were you a fan of funny animal comics from the past?*
JIM: Yeah, *some* funny animal comics but certainly funny animal animated cartoons. Wacky owes his background to both.
ANDY: *What cartoon characters or animators were influential in your work there?*
JIM: Well very obviously **Tex Avery** and his boys from Warner Brothers had the most influence, **Chuck Jones** and **Bob Clampett,** and also some of the **Tex Avery** M-G-M work. The obvious comparison is with Screwy Squirrel, in fact some people have thought he *is* Screwy

. . . as Tex Avery's SCREWY SQUIRREL takes to painting (1944).

Screwy Squirrel is TM & © 1944-46 MGM/Frederick Bean "TEX" Avery

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"Obviously Tex Avery & his boys had the most influence."

Squirrel. But if you look at both of them they're quite different in appearance.

ANDY: *And you got involved later with coplotting WACKY?*

JIM: Yes, I've done everything from coplotting and scripting to doing all of the pencils and inks. I only had help *once* on the inks, in one issue, from **Art Nichols. Mike Richardson** does a lot of the writing.

ANDY: *How is your working relationship with Mike?*

JIM: Oh, real good, it's a real enjoyable rapport that we have. We seem to enjoy the same type of gags and level of humor.

ANDY: *You've also been involved with Dark Horse's INSANE, doing a few parodies. You've done a parody of CONCRETE called "Cement," and also the GODZILLA parody called "Clodzilla" —*

JIM: Godzilla's country cousin coming to the big city to visit his more sophisticated cousin, you can imagine how *that* might go, or you can *read* about it in INSANE #1. *(Laughter.)* Yeah, I like that kind of thing a lot. I like to get into the reference, for example the "Clodzilla" story features just about every Tojo mutant animal creature that they ever had, I don't even know all their names. *(Laughter.)* All of them are in there somewhere if you look for them. I liked finding funny situations to put them in, it's a lot of fun cooking those up.

ANDY: *How do you approach doing a parody of Paul Chadwick's stuff?*

JIM: Well, I wanted to study his style. I really tried to get not only the *line* quality in the drawing, but actually the page layout *look*, too — the way the blacks are in there, the way the panels are arranged, so that at a glance you might think it was a CONCRETE page. I haven't inked it yet, that'll be the test I guess. *(Laughter.)*

1988 Jim Bradrick

"Cagney & Lacey" by Jim. Of course, the heads are MUCH too small!

ANDY: *I've seen the pencils and they did look very Chadwicky.* (Laughter.) *What do you see as your future in comics?*

JIM: Well, I don't know. I'd like to keep at it. I'm trying to build a reputation as a steady worker with a lot of versatility. I'm *glad* for the opportunity to have *done* something besides WACKY, because I didn't want to be typed as someone who can only do funny animals. I can draw other things and I want people to know that, so I hope for the opportunity to do other things as well.

ANDY: *What's your preferred genre? Would you like to do superheroes?*

JIM: No, I don't think I want to do superheroes because if there's anything that's been done to death — although I still find some of them enjoyable — superheroes certainly had all of the attention that it can take and I don't know that

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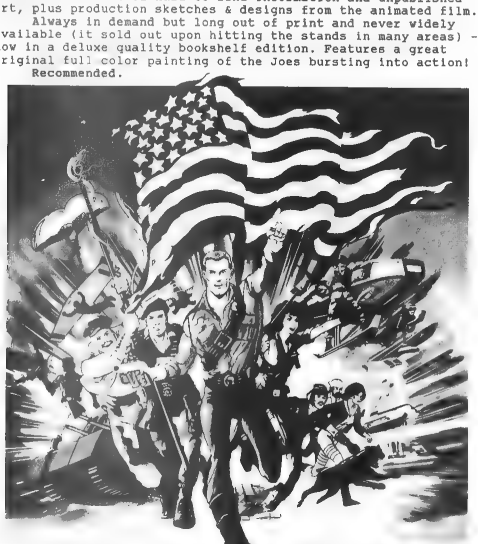

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"I'm 42, so I grew up with mostly DC Comics (1950s)."

Gilbert's MR. MONSTER made a guest appearance in WACKY SQUIRREL HALLOWEEN ADVENTURE SPECIAL (1987).

I could add anything to that genre. I'd like to try some of the offbeat things, and I kind of like the *shorter* pieces, too — the one-shots or the short series where you can take an idea that might not be able to be sustained for *years* and just work it through to its logical conclusion. I think with that approach you can take on more subjects. If you're always having to think of something that can be sustained for years then I think that really limits you.

ANDY: *Do you have plans for stories or possibly a series of your own?*

JIM: Nothing I can really talk about right now. I *do* have an idea, in fact I had the idea before I ever started WACKY SQUIRREL, and it kind of dovetails right into WACKY SQUIRREL, has to do with his principal foil, Harold Hound. But I really don't want to say anything more about it at this time. But I do have an idea for a kind of spin-off from that.

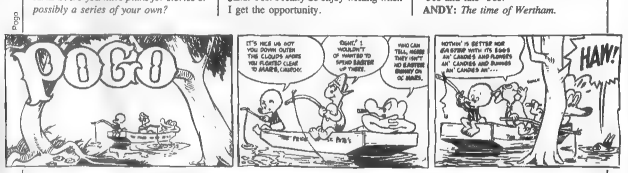
ANDY: *Would that be completely written and drawn by you?*

JIM: Yes. I really do enjoy writing when I get the opportunity.

ANDY: *Do you follow the comics industry a lot?*

JIM: I don't follow it as intensely as a lot of the people around me, no. I sometimes have to be told who some character is that *everybody* else seems to know about. *(Laughter.)* I'm 42, so I grew up with mostly DC comics. When a lot of the people were reading Marvel comics I was already a little bit past the regular comics reading age. When I was a kid was the mid '50s and late '50s.

ANDY: *The time of Wertham.*


Pogo - 1949-88 Walt Kelly Estate
POGO
IT'S HERE WE GOT YOU DOWN OUTER THE CLOUD WHERE YOU FLOATED CLEAR TO JAMES CLARKIN.
RIGHT, I WOULDN'T OF WANTED TO SPEND EASTER UP THERE.
WHO CAN TELL WHERE THEY ISN'T NO EASTER BUNNY IN OL' IRAN.
NOTHIN' IS BETTER FOR EASTER MORN THAN EGGS AN' CANDIES AND FLOWERS AN' CANDIES AND BUNNIES AN' CANDIES AN'...
HAW!

The enchanting character and detail of Walt Kelly's POGO (Okefenokee Swamp).

"I was a big SUPERMAN fan as a kid, I really was."

JIM: Yeah, m-hm, and the time of suppression of the comics industry by outside, the Comics Code thing and all of that. It dwindled down to a lot fewer titles during that time period.

ANDY: *Were you much of a fan of the old EC comics?*

JIM: Yeah, I *sorta* remember those. I was a *big* SUPERMAN fan as a kid, I really was. I know all of the TV episodes and I enjoyed the '50s SUPERMAN, the **Wayne Boring** version. It was a little bizarre but it entertained the hell out of *me! (Laughter.)* And I remember the early CAPTAIN MARVEL. At the time I didn't know why it disappeared. *(Laughter.)* Yeah, I liked that. And I remember liking the LITTLE LULU comics, the Witch Hazel adventures and so on, and *some* of the funny animal comics.

ANDY: *Do you think, then, being a fan of the gentler type stories affects your work now?* (Pause.) *In terms of, you know, rather than being a fan of the EC comics you were more a fan of the gentler funny comics.*

JIM: I don't know. I . . . I don't have a good response to that one. *(Laughter.)* I don't think so. Are you talking about the *horror* comics or the science fictions or what?

ANDY: *Basically I'm comparing those comics that are nonviolent as opposed to those that are violent.*

JIM: Well, Wacky's pretty violent in his own little funny animal world, about as much as we can get away with without showing *blood. (Laughter.)* And also I must say, as a timely note, that I've seen ROGER RABBIT twice and probably will see it more. It's real gratifying to me, I enjoy every second of it.

TM & © 1938-88 DC Comics, Inc

SUPERMAN as he first appeared in 1938. . .50-years later WACKY SQUIRREL.

"Wacky's pretty violent in his own little funny animal world."

1988 Touchstone Pictures/Amblin Entertainment

ANDY: *Do you see any correlations between the resurgence of the funny animal medium and maybe the popularity of ROGER RABBIT?*

JIM: Yes! I *hope* that this movie will — I don't know that I *see* it, it's too early to spot it as a trend — but I certainly hope that this will do something for both cartoon animation and, yeah, funny animal literature of *all* kinds. When I go to the conventions I'm trying to get a copy of every funny animal series ever done in the Golden Age.

ANDY: *One issue of each?*

JIM: Yeah, at least one issue. I don't look for mint issues, just something I can thumb through. A lot of them are *real* disappointing, a lot of them are real *crap!* They're not well written. Some *are* written for tiny children, they're pretty boring. Also the artwork, the *covers* are usually the best part. *(Laughter.)* It's pretty disappointing from then on. But some of them are good, and there's some great old stuff. **Jack Bradbury,** I guess he was an animator of some kind, there's a *book* about him I've seen, and his stuff is wonderful, the style is great. Then of course **Walt Kelly,** what can I say. So yeah, I hope ROGER RABBIT is a breakthrough. It's a real *milestone* because it's an animated movie that *adults* are going to see, and that is hard to do.

ANDY: *Right, and it isn't even Walt Disney — but I guess it's Touchstone, which* is *Walt Disney.*

JIM: It wasn't done in the Disney studio, it was done by **Richard Williams** basically I haven't read any good technical articles about it yet, but they used some Disney facilities and Disney money but it wasn't done inside the womb of the Disney Studios. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Do you think that's going to be one of the waves of the future in movie making or in animation, the mixture of human actors with cartoon characters?*

JIM: Well, you can only do so many. Probably there will be some really *terrible* rip offs of it, with crummy animation and bad stories. It's *hard* to write a story, very *difficult,* a serious story that needs to be animated. I've tried to do it and you end up writing something that's too serious and you realize you don't need animation for it, or it's too frivolous and it isn't worth 80 minutes. So that's going to be the hard part, getting the good scripts. But I'm just glad to see one film full of animation that adults go to see. That's great. There'll be some more I'm sure, but I'm glad to see just the one.

ANDY: *What are you doing now with your career?*

JIM: I'm trying to revitalize the animation end of it a little bit, it's what I do best and I'm not getting to do much of it. I'm working on a little under one minute promotional film to market my animation skills. I've worked before through other companies where you kind of become an anonymous workman and they don't realize that so-and-so did the animation, they just think such-and-such a *company* did the animation, and that doesn't do your career any good.

And that's one thing I *like* about the comics industry, people know who I *am.* People look at the drawings and they go back and look at the name! That *never* happened in animation. Particularly in TV commercials, you *never* get any credit. To find out who did the animation on some TV commercials you'd really have to do some research. And in comics it's right out in the open and people are *encouraged* to know who did what. I think that's great.

COMICS INTERVIEW

#31

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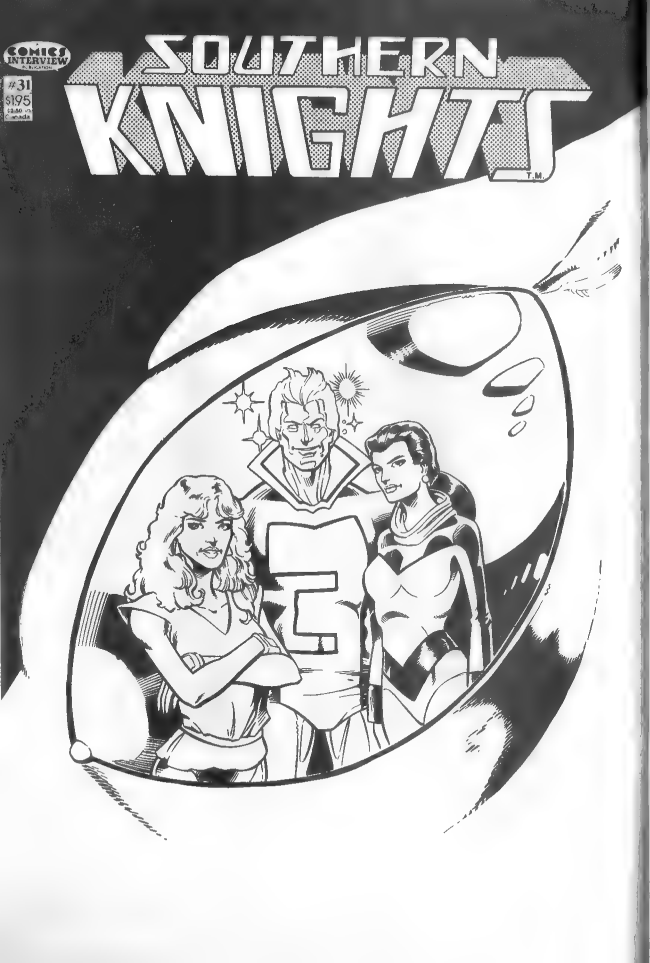


"I used to say, 'Give me JUSTICE LEAGUE!'"

KEITH GIFFEN & ANDY HELFER

Though they are the editor and plotter of what has been called "the funniest superhero comic book being published today," JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL's Andy Helfer and Keith Giffen take their work very seriously. Helfer and Giffen think about what they do, and care very deeply about how it is received. But that should come as no surprise. The real mystery here is, given the decades of foundation justice groups have at DC, how did they come up with the idea to play JLI for comedy...

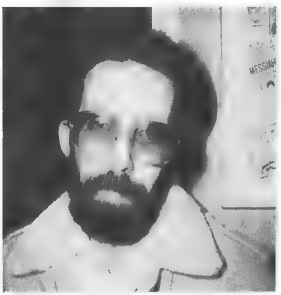
PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *JUSTICE LEAGUE developed partly out of LEGENDS, and obviously it continues a concept at DC that dates back to the '40s. You guys have taken a different tack on it this time, it's being played with a much lighter touch than in the past. What made you guys decide that that was the way to go?*

KEITH GIFFEN: You're making the wrong assumption, there was never a conscious decision to go that way, it evolved into that.

ANDY HELFER: Well, I don't know, I think that part of it —

KEITH: I didn't walk into it thinking it would be a funny book.

ANDY: When it came time to do it I very consciously felt that we *had* to do something very different than what was out there. I had had a lot of talks with various people about the grim and gritty focus of so many comics that DARK KNIGHT... I mean it went on *before* DARK KNIGHT, but DARK KNIGHT really —



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"JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE will

KEITH: Made it trendy.
ANDY: It made it something that everyone else was doing, and everyone aspired to have that kind of character. We had arguments, discussions about this, among the editors, among free-lancers. There was always the question of does that constitute something *good*, can something that's *not* grim and gritty be good? Do we just want to see Wolverine ripping people apart, Batman facing whatever dilemma he's facing, or is there a region for levity, for some other kind of approach? Keith and I were sitting around one day and we were looking for an outlet for it — Keith was coming off of SON OF AMBUSH BUG and he was looking for work and I was looking to work with him —
KEITH: I used to bother you — for two years I used to walk into your office and say, "Give me JUSTICE LEAGUE!"
ANDY: So I asked Keith, and we were talking about how to justify what we *wanted* to do, which was add an air of humor to the whole thing. The thing that we hit on was the concept of the fraternity of heroes. When a super-hero is running around helping people or fighting villains, they have to have a persona, they have to be a hero, they have to be someone that you look to, but when they're all together, when the door is closed, it doesn't really matter and they can let their hair hang down, be a very different kind of person. It goes back to Spider-Man, I guess; when Spider-Man first started, the juxtaposition between the guy who was always joking when he was fighting and the guy who was plagued by doubts — it's *another* kind of spin of that kind of duality.
KEITH: JUSTICE LEAGUE is really a *buddy* book.
ANDY: Yeah, with lots of buddies. *(Laughter.)*
KEITH: When I get together with my friends it's not always this existential shriek of angst, we don't sit around and bemoan the fact of our existence, there's usually a lot of wisecracking back and forth and we try to have as good a time as possible. Why should these guys be any different?
ANDY: What goes on in Mensa meetings? We don't *know* what goes on because we're not members of that club, they could take all their clothes off and run around naked for all we know. *(Laughter.)* But when they come out on the street they all have their public image. So who knows, if you're in the Justice League you could just go and close the door and take your clothes off.
PAT: *In terms of working method, you've had from the beginning an unusual tripartite creative team — Keith's doing plots, Kevin Maguire or Ty Templeton do the finished art, and Marc DeMatteis writes the script. How do you break down what's plot, what's script, what's art? Looking at it, Keith, it's very obvious that underneath that somewhere is your work, in terms of the art style.*
ANDY: That look that is definitely *there* is, to my mind... the necessity of it is that Keith can't type. *(Laughter.)* Keith is the most visual thinking person that I know, it's actually *easier* for Keith to draw

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Andy Helfer
Born: Brooklyn, NY
Education: A degree in film and English from the University of Rochester; grad school at NYU; I've been bar mitzvahed *(Laughter.)*
Occupation: I edit JLI; SPECTRE; NEW GUARDIANS; HAYWIRE; INVASION; COPS; MISTER MIRACLE; THE HUNTRESS; JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE: Writes THE SHADOW; working on a two-part prestige book with another old pulp character, the Avenger. In past I edited ATARI FORCE, GREEN LANTERN and GREEN LANTERN CORPS, and so on
Years At: I've been at DC since 1980. I got my job through a misplaced ad at NYU; they intended it to be placed in the marketing department and somehow it got stuck to the wall in the journalism school.

have more serious moments than JLI."

out a page and describe what's going on with little notes than it would be for Keith to type a page of plot. It's a blueprint. What happens is Keith sets the foundation for the visual look and the story look . . . Let me step back, it's funny because what I tell the artist is what I tell a guy who wants to draw comics for the first time, and that is take a page of a comic book, define what the meaning is, define what the story of it is, and redraw it the way *you* would tell the story. In other words —

KEITH: Just make sure that the Batman punch is on the page, the information is relayed.

ANDY: And because Keith is such a good storyteller many people say, "Hey, he did it the best way I know how, I'm gonna do that." So no matter who was drawing JUSTICE LEAGUE, it has the same kind of visual integrity.

KEITH: It has the same rhythm, the storytelling has the same rhythm, that's the way I look at it. I figure I set the rhythm for the book.

ANDY: People always have the option, and on occasion they will deviate 180 degrees from what Keith put down, and usually it improves because of that. It's like you do it the good way first, and if you're going to change it you have to make it better. So it's actually a great advantage for people because they have the first thoughts down on paper already, so a variation they take is because the basic story has inspired them to go one step better. It's an ideal thing, if I could I'd have Keith plot all of his books. The great thing about it from an editorial point of view is that you sit down to go through the plot and you actually have a comic book in your hand, it's like instant comics!

PAT: *How much of what the reader perceives as humor is Keith's work, and how much is Marc's dialogue*? (Pause.) *I realize every reader reads it differently . . . how much of the final product, in terms of where the jokes are if you will, is in Keith's plot?*

ANDY: I would say that's around 80 per cent. Would you say that, would that be a fair representation?

KEITH: Marc handles *all* dialogue. I might put down a couple of little notes *describing* the situation, but I look upon the book as like a silent movie, so the more visual humor would be mine. And as far as I'm concerned Marc has carte blanche with the dialogue. He'll put stuff in dialogue that I'll pick up on and throw back to him in another issue. It's kind of hard to actually separate it, but anything you catch in dialogue is Marc's. If it's a visual gag or something like that, usually that's come from me.

ANDY: The banter comes from Marc.

KEITH: Yeah.

ANDY: Picture WHAT'S UP, TIGER LILY? — you remember *that* one! *(Laughter.)* I mean instead of being a serious James Bond situation, when Keith hands it over it does have funny situations in it, but it goes far beyond what Keith put in there initially. Sometimes we have to pull back. Very often, because we have such a good letterer on the book, **Bob Lappan,** who can actually fit *all* of that stuff in and not make it look as though people are defending themselves against rampant balloons, that *allows* more of the interplay. There's a lot more back and forth dialogue in JUSTICE LEAGUE than in most other books just because of the physical space limitations that practically any other letterer would run up against. **Lappan** allows for so much *more* copy, and so more verbal interaction, to take place.

That's why Bob is the letterer on THE SHADOW, because I do the same sort of

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Keith Giffen

Born: Queens; lived upstairs from Whitey Ford

Education: Graduated from Maseka Valley High School in Little Falls; worked for Johnson Tobacco; handled hazardous material; got a couple of jobs in comics; sold vacuum cleaners door to door; was a repo man; got into phone collections; picked up some ghost stories, from there it was DR. FATE and LEGION and on and on.

Credits: DEFENDERS; ALL-STAR SQUADRON; CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN; layouts for Wally Wood; LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, AMBUSH BUG; HEX; HELL ON EARTH graphic novel; JLI; JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE; L.E.G.I.O.N. '89; working on a CREEPER mini-series and RAGMAN for the future

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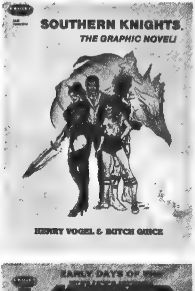

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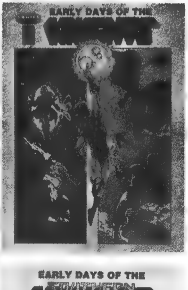

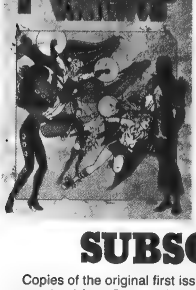

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--CONTROL YOUR HORMONES.
I CAN'T HELP MYSELF, SCOTT - I'M IN LOVE!
WELL, MAYBE IT'S LUST... NO, NO -- IT'S DEFINITELY LOVE!
WELL, MAYBE IT'S A LITTLE OF BOTH!
THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING -- DIN... ER... BLACK CANARY'S SUMMONS SO PROMPTLY. I'M VERY GRATEFUL -- TO ALL OF YOU.
IT WAS MOST CERTAINLY BEING OUR PLEASURE TO RESPOND, WONDERFUL WOMAN. PLEASE CALL US ANY TIME!
I'M STILL NOT CLEAR ON THE SITUATION
PSST -- WILL YOU LOOK AT THE WAY DWIN! AND BEETLE ARE DROOLING OVER THAT AMAZON HUSSY! IT'S DISGUSTING!
SHE'S HARDLY A HUSSY, ICE, AND IT'S NOT AFFIX FAULT THAT SHE'S SO EXTRAORDINARILY BEAUTIFUL! SHE REDUCES MEN TO PANTING, ADOLESCENTS

back and forth stuff on THE SHADOW and Bob is really the only person who can do the book. As a matter of fact the new book that we're doing, MISTER MIRACLE, I got the lettering back -- **Marc DeMattels** is writing it, and it's more of a smile book than a laugh book -- but he did that same kind of back and forth thing, and when I got the pages back we had to have half the pages redrawn because the lettering just overwhelmed the drawing. So you can't underestimate **Bob Lappan's** contribution because he really lets us talk. It's like using a quality tape versus a cheap tape, you get so much more frequency and so much more range out of a high quality tape.

PAT: *You've got a spin-off coming out soon, JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE. Do you foresee that being in the same tone?*

KEITH: I don't foresee it being as overt as JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL. I'm sure there's going to be the camaraderie and the "wink wink nudge nudge" kind of situations, but JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE will have more serious moments than JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL has.

ANDY: Part of the thing here is . . . we've run out of characters from cancelled books, basically. *(Laughter.)* You can't play characters who have their own books -- I mean we do that with Batman and Captain Atom, and people *say* Batman would never put up with this stuff, but *beyond* the fact that Batman would never put up with this stuff, he's never really compromised as a character. You know, it's Batman with children, basically -- what would Batman be like if he had kids But *now* we've run out of characters we *want* to do who don't have their own books. So we'll be using characters like the Flash, Wonder Woman, and we have to have more consistency. We're playing fast and loose with the DC Universe as it is, but too fast and too loose is --

KEITH: Even so, you don't want to come across like you're Johnny One-Note. JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE I hope will have a distinctly different feel from JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL.

PAT: *Other than Flash and Wonder Woman, who are the scheduled members of JLE?*

ANDY: We're still playing with the lineup, we're still in negotiations for some of these characters.

KEITH: Currently it's Animal Man, the Elongated Man, two Justice League International members who will switch over to the Justice League Europe -- it looks right now like it'll be Captain Atom and Rocket Red. Am I missing anybody? Flash, Wonder Woman . . . Maybe eventually new characters will walk in.

ANDY: I do expect there to be a certain fluidity between the two books, simply because --

KEITH: They are one organization, Justice League International, and one happens to be headquartered at the European embassy.

PAT: *None of the characters you've mentioned, except Rocket Red who's from the U.S.S.R., have previously been based in Europe. How are you going to deal with that?*

ANDY: Well, some of the characters were supposed to be, there are two who started

"You don't have to read any other DC

Y'KNOW, THAT'S WHAT I LOVE ABOUT BATS--HE'S GOT SUCH A WINNING WAY WITH PEOPLE!
BACK OFF, BATMAN--
BUT--
BACK OFF!
YES... YOU HEARD YOUR GREEN FRIEND. B-B-BACK--
SHUT UP.
Y-Y-YES, OF COURSE.
Y'KNOW, I NEVER NOTICED BEFORE WHAT A LOVELY FLAG YOU SOVIETS HAVE.
WHO'S YOUR DESIGNER?

out as JLE characters but didn't finish up that way, the Icemaiden and Green Flame. Well, Green Flame was from a South American country —

KEITH: Brazil.

ANDY: But Icemaiden was from Denmark. But that idea was lost somewhere along the line. That was fine, I wasn't that upset with that, and hopefully Keith has plans to introduce regional characters.

KEITH: You could get away with Wonder Woman being European based if you could figure out where Themyscira is.

ANDY: I don't think we're supposed to say. *(Laughter.)*

KEITH: The key to dealing with characters who have their own books, in JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL or in JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE, is when they leave the embassy I don't follow them home. My concern is when they are on Justice League business, when they're *in* the books. It's not for me to say where Paradise Island is or follow up with what Wonder Woman is doing with Mercury. I'll keep tabs with George for the continuity.

ANDY: If Denny came in and said, you know, Batman was fighting this guy who took over the Wayne Foundation, there might be a thought balloon in some quieter scene where it says, "What am I going to do about the Wayne Foundation?" But for the most part we have our hands full, to go outside that front door, as Keith said, would make it company wide crossovers every month, it would just be too much. Also it would deter from the enjoyment, because frankly right now you don't have to read any other DC books to enjoy JUSTICE LEAGUE, and that's part of the *benefit* of it. I think one of the reasons why it does so well is it has a much wider range of potential readers than many books that are so bogged down in the continuity. Continuity is something that I think the few crave, but it's also kind of an elitist thing where it keeps those people in in and keeps new people out. The people who are in don't mind it because they know where it's at —

KEITH: But it tends to diminish rather than enhance.

PAT: *Speaking of elitism and things like that, and longtime readers; with the distinct difference in tone that the JLI has, as compared to JLA or JSA, have you gotten any complaints from old-time fans saying this is not proper, this is not the way the book should be?*

ANDY: I've gotten far more on THE SHADOW than on JUSTICE LEAGUE.

KEITH: I go through letters sometimes and haven't come across any like that.

ANDY: There's been one or two, in the beginning. When it first started they said, "Wait a second, what's going on here!"

KEITH: We really haven't done anything that would get those kind of people angry anyway. I mean the characters are presented *consistently*. If the character doesn't have a book then we have every right to have him grow and develop in *this* book. If a character has his own book, we're handling him.

ANDY: We do get letters from people who say that Batman would never stand up for that — the letters when they do come negative are directed to the treatment of a single character, never of the group as a whole. You know, some guy likes Elongated Man and he says in this 1966 story he said this, he would *never* do what he did in that issue.

KEITH: So in the last 20 years he changed his mind.

ANDY: But that's only two years in comic-book time. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *You brought up THE SHADOW so let's talk about that. You said you have gotten some negative mail on the fact that you're treating THE SHADOW, again, with a sense of humor that many old-time SHADOW fans would find offensive?*

ANDY: Uh... *(long pause)*... yeah. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *What made you decide to take it that way? It certainly was not present in the Chaykin mini-series.*

ANDY: There were little touches of it. I think Howard and I pretty much are on the same wavelength, and when the series started out it pretty much did carry on, had the same *grotesqueness* as Howard's thing. It was less in a sexual context, less of a sexual subtext I should say. I love Howard's work, he's one of the best. When Kyle came on — I saw his previous work and I just saw that there was *such* a resource here, something you just *couldn't* resist, so I would say it has *evolved* into what it is. I think Kyle is the next great comics genius. I don't know how long he'll stay in comics before he moves on to something more lucrative, but for me he's one of the top comics guys around. Comics in the comic-book sense and comic in the comic sense, the guy has a range that is just remarkable.

But what happened very much from the outset with THE SHADOW was that a decision had to be made, what is the book going to be. *(Pause.)* THE SHADOW and JUSTICE LEAGUE came out pretty much concurrently, I think JUSTICE LEAGUE has a month or two on THE SHADOW,

books to enjoy JUSTICE LEAGUE."

and once again we were dealing with the same question, "What can I do to make this book different? Why does it have to be grim and gritty?" THE QUESTION had just come out, THE PUNISHER was out, all this stuff — I mean they're obviously very different books, I don't want to lump THE QUESTION and THE PUNISHER together, but they have the same grim and gritty thing

KEITH: And don't forget the fact that the previous grim and gritty incarnation of THE SHADOW took a nose dive.

ANDY: Yeah, it had failed, but one could say they were ahead of their time and if they had come out today then perhaps they would —

KEITH: Perhaps.

ANDY: As it is we're reprinting the old books. So what I did was come to the same kind of conclusions. I mean if you came out with THE SHADOW today people would say it's a rip-off of BATMAN, you know — it's like what was **Paul McCartney's** band before Wings. *(Laughter.)* It's that kind of thing, people today have forgotten the ancestors of what is popular today, so it had to have a different kind of feel. So I've always been a real fan of black comedy, black humor, and I figured let's try that, and when Kyle came on the book it just really took off — pretty grotesque these days.

PAT: *Considering the reader who is not aware of the history, as it were, does that make for problems doing a book like THE SHADOW with a character who has a history, when you have to deal with explaining him?*

ANDY: I very rarely ever explain him. **Howard Chaykin** spent an entire issue explaining him, I don't think you need to know anything *beyond* what Howard did. It doesn't help to know because the agents are all new, with the exception of two old people you just know are *old* people who know the Shadow from way back when. Once again it's who do I shoot to please. Do I shoot to please the guys who have every SHADOW pulp in their collections, do I shoot for the people who know the Shadow because their father once told them when he was a kid he used to listen to THE SHADOW on the radio — I'd rather go for the latter.

Also, as far as THE SHADOW goes, so *many* things have changed since then. Talk about the Oriental villain, the Orient does not have the *mystery* that it used to have, and 50 per cent of the stuff in the old pulps is all these Oriental masterminds —

KEITH: The Fu Manchu syndrome.

ANDY: The Fu Manchu stuff doesn't

NINE-POINT-TWO HOURS..
THANK YOU, MR. BRECK.
PARDON ME?
JUST A LITTLE JOKE, BATS.
JUST ONCE, I'D LIKE TO BUSH OFF TO SAVE THE WORLD — AND HAVE IT BE A GUY, MADCAP ESCAPADE!
SPARE US THE HUMOR, BEETLE. THIS IS SERIOUS BUSINESS.
ISN'T IT ALWAYS?
I DON'T LIKE YOUR ATTITUDE, MISTER.
BLUE BEETLE MEANT NO HARM TO BATMAN, AND, FRANKLY, IT MAY HAVE BEEN A LONG NIGHT.
WOULD'VE GONE BY FASTER IF WE'D SUNG "ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT" LIKE I SUGGESTED...
I'M SORRY IF I'VE BEEN SHORT-TEMPERED, BUT THOSE THREE NUKE BLASTERS HAVE ME WORRIED.
THEN WHY DIDN'T WE GRAB 'EM WHEN WE HAD THE CHANCE?
GARDNER.. SHUT YOUR ETERNALLY FLAPPING MOUTH BEFORE I—
WE WERE ACCEPTING BIALYAN AIRSPACE / IT WAS WISER TO RETREAT AND WAIT FOR THEM TO--
WISER TO RETREAT? IT'S NEVER WISE TO RETREAT!

"Readers want a book to either stay in

work today because we *know* what's there, the gates have opened, so in a contemporary context half of the old stuff is totally invalidated. And it's not effective in a nostalgic context either, to my mind, because it was bullshit and you *knew* it was bullshit back *then!* Back then the people did not *know* what was in the Orient, but *nobody* knew — it's like we don't know what's on the bottom of the sea, they didn't know what was on the other side of the world — so there was a kind of presumed reality to this stuff. Today you read these things and think how ridiculous, so the old stuff wouldn't work. Well, Nazis still work because you just cannot *believe* Nazis — the horror of Nazis is they actually *did* the unbelievable, there is still a fascination with that.

PAT: *Keith, you've mentioned yourself you've gone back to LEGION, God help you* — (Laughter.) *Why go back? Why pick up a project that you had left?*

KEITH: I left it after three years on the book. I think I was overloading —

ANDY: Leaving a book after three years is perfectly justified.

KEITH: Three years on a book is a rarity in this business, twelve *months* is a rarity. Well, they asked me if I'd want to come back on board for awhile, and it had been about... five years was it?

PAT: *Yeah.*

KEITH: I've always gotten a kick out of the book, plus Karen and Paul sort of have a tendency to let me rampage through the book, so I thought I'd give it a shot. Let me put it this way, there were not people lining up outside Karen's office wanting to do LEGION.

PAT: *Tough book just because of the number of characters?*

KEITH: The number of characters, the background on it, there's no real point of reference. In JUSTICE LEAGUE I can say they go to Paris, I can go down to the bookstore and pick up a book on Paris. I *can't* pick up a book on Paris in the 30th century, there's *no* books on Winath or any of the planets out there, you've got to establish architecture, you've got to establish customs, the way the characters dress — which I enjoy doing but it's time consuming. So I figured it was time to go

place forever or progress more rapidly."

back. I always enjoyed the book. I can't say that I left the book in anger or because I didn't feel I was getting anything out of it, I just left it because I felt I'd pretty much shot my wad.

ANDY: That's a gunsmith term. *(Laughter.)*

KEITH: And bullshit is a farming term. *(Laughter.)* But there's a lot more freedom on THE LEGION than I get on a lot of other books, plus the fact that it's so far *removed* from this DC continuity which can get kind of anal retentive sometimes. You can blow up the moon.

ANDY: Unfortunately Keith has now taken the 30th century continuity and placed it *firmly* in the 20th century, with INVASION and all of the alien races.

KEITH: Well, that's sort of like throwing them backwards.

ANDY: Now you can't say they evolved instantaneously last month, because they were in INVASION

KEITH: True. I'm just going to avoid them from now on. *(Laughter.)* Believe me, after INVASION there's a lot of stuff I'm not going to be touching.

PAT: *I'm sure many fans, when they look at the new issues of LEGION that you've done, said this is not what they recognize as Keith Giffen's work on THE LEGION.*

KEITH: That's okay, I didn't recognize it either. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Or even Keith Giffen's work he did in the run of stuff between the two runs of LEGION. You have a reputation for shifting styles.*

KEITH: Every book dictates its own approach. I've said this a million times, each project dictates your approach I'd hate to think that I'm going to reach a certain point and just run in place for the rest of my career; if that happens I'll just leave the business, because you're not doing anyone any good. I kind of like the fact that people pick up a book of mine and they're not going to have that.. you know, you pick up a book by Artist A and you have a pretty decent idea of what Artist A is going to deliver. I don't like being thought of in that way. I like the idea that people are going to say, "Oh, he's going on to this book, what kind of damage is he going to cause now!"

ANDY: Yeah, I think that — if I may interject here — I think it's as much for the creative people's sanity as for anything else.

KEITH: Yes.

ANDY: I know that when I finish with THE SHADOW I will not be doing another black humor book, because I don't *want* to and because half of me says, "Do something different, let's *surprise* people." You have to make the job new for yourself or you'll go nuts.

KEITH: Yeah, a lot of it *is* boredom. I get *bored* with what I've been doing and I look around and think, "Let's see how they react to this." We get a lot of letters saying, "Boy, we're glad Keith is back, we wish Keith would go back five years." I feel a little bit like **Woody Allen** sometimes, you know — "I love your films, when are you going to make a funny one again?" *(Laughter.)*

I can understand the readers to a certain extent wanting the familiarity, then you know what you're going to pick up; but then they're the ones who are the first ones to ditch the book saying, "Hey, it's the same thing over and over again." The longtime readers want a book to either stay in place forever or progress more rapidly, and you run a risk either way. If you want to keep a book *alive* then you've got to keep developing it, but you can't develop it to the point where you alienate any new readers from likely picking it up, and you certainly don't want to run in place and keep regurgitating the same stuff over and over and over again, because then you're not going to be able to hold onto the readers. It's a high wire act.

ANDY: One of the things . . . the future of JUSTICE LEAGUE is looking a little different than the past of JUSTICE LEAGUE, that kind of makes it new for us, hopefully the readers will go along with some of the secretive things we're planning. But, you know, it's very *different* than what they're expecting, and as a reader I like that. Fiction is a manipulation, the reader is manipulated one way and then pulled the other way, and as long as you *like* that kind of manipulation you go along for the ride, and the more pulls and screens and turns the better It's a **Hitchcock** formula.

KEITH: I don't like a book where you start knowing how it's going to end. I like the idea that as the pages are turned you're never quite sure what's going to happen.

ANDY: The thing why they believe that sells is *death*, and what is death but a metaphor for the unexpected, you know.

PAT: *Oh. I don't know, when you plaster it on the cover then I kind of expect it.*

ANDY: Right, right. *(Laughter.)* But that's the misinterpretation of it, you see.

PAT: *You guys obviously have something of an intellectual approach to what you do. Comic books have an image, however, of being mindless, and certainly today even among the hard-core fans there is a self-image that they are people who only read comics — the background outside of comics might go to television and the occa-*

"It's not an intellectual treatise, it's a comic book."

sional sf movie, but is not well rounded in the usual sense. In that sense do you ever feel like you've left your reading public behind?

KEITH: Sheesh. *(Laughter.)* Boy, this is going to sound terrible, but when I sit down to plot the book I don't have the audience in mind. I sit down and plot something that I feel satisfied with, that I feel is a good *story.* I'm not going to try to second guess everybody out there. And a lot of what you were talking about, the reputation that the comic-book fan has — he reads the comic books, reads science fiction maybe, and goes to see INDIANA JONES films — I'd like to think that that's a pretty vocal minority. You're not going to leave the readership behind by doing well rounded stories, you're going to bring in new readers.

PAT: *Andy, what's your attitude towards it?*

ANDY: I'm not quite sure of the question.

KEITH: He wants to know if we think we're writing above our —

PAT: *Yeah, are you writing above your target audience, or are you misinterpreting your target audience possibly?*

ANDY: Well, when I write... the audience for THE SHADOW is different from the audience for JUSTICE LEAGUE, the people who write in on THE SHADOW tend to be much older. I don't know. It's like when I was a kid I read the classics, I read them because I enjoyed them, and then when I got to college there was a whole 'nother level in them that I found, they were working on a whole different level, and I appreciated them then again. The *best* books have more than one level. When I write THE SHADOW it works on a surface level, the story is as it is, but there are a lot of smaller things that are going on and readers who want to pour over it again can see things, hopefully, that they never saw the first time. It's not like it's an intellectual treatise or something, it's a comic book, it's a story, and stories should be able to be appreciated by all, but like MOBY DICK can be — *(Laughter.)* I'm certainly *not* comparing the two, but that's the typical book you could say could be read on different levels. JUSTICE LEAGUE is a super-hero book, it's much less concerned with the real world, much more submerged in this alternate reality. Something like THE SHADOW has *one* element of unreality in an otherwise real world.

KEITH: One thing, when we were doing AMBUSH BUG we made a couple of references in one of the issues to **Tip O'Neill** and — I'm not going to mention the person — but someone up in the office came to us and said, "Are you sure that the readers will know who Tip O'Neill is?" I said I thought the audience I was shooting for would — I was kind of appalled that they would think that.

ANDY: Well, you have to remember where you read your first comic. I read my first comic book in a barbershop, sitting on a horse. *(Laughter.)* I was seven years old or something, and there still *are* seven-year-old kids who read comics, and you have to be able to consider those kinds of people.

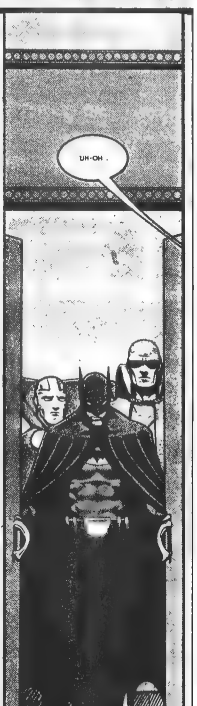
KEITH: But not to the exclusion of all else.

ANDY: Oh, definitely not. To the exclusion of all else is Star Comics. That's not to say that Star Comics are bad, but that's not what we're doing.

KEITH: I think what we're trying to say in our halting, bumbling way is we have *no* idea what our audience is. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: I'd like to find out, invite them all up. *(Laughter.)* There's a lot of stuff in a lot of different media where certain people will pick it up at certain levels, certain people will understand lines of dialogue that other people won't understand, and as long as the pivotal thing is not that thing then you're okay.

KEITH: As long as the story is told in clear, precise terms, you can get away with occasional things. A lot of writers and artists in the business nowadays are forgetting that the story comes first and foremost. The pretty art's there, that'll guarantee a certain amount of sales, and some snappy dialogue works, but if the story isn't there, if the rhythm of the book, the structure of the book, isn't there, it doesn't matter what you do, it's just not going to appeal to people. Some of the stuff I see now, it's like art films, you don't understand what's going on but it's *the* thing to appreciate. I can see *some* comics head in that direction, avant-garde kind of comics, but for mass consumption it's tell the story, get the story out there. Then you can do your little perks, you can throw in the occasional comment where maybe the dad reading it to the kids will go, "Hey, I get that."



LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

WANTS FEELINGS KNOWN

To whom it may concern:

I wish to protest the failure of AMAZING HEROES and COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE to print any of my recent letters concerning AH editor **Kevin Dooley**'s treatment of my fellow reader **Jeff Melton** in AH #127 or my response to **Max Allan Collins**' editorial against me in CBG #736. The lack of respect shown by AH and CBG to readers has become appalling.

Jeff Melton had a letter printed in AH #127 criticizing **Mark Gruenwald**'s treatment of CAPTAIN AMERICA. While Jeff may have gone overboard in his anger at **Gruenwald** for ruining his favorite character, **Kevin Dooley**'s treatment of Jeff was just as bad. **Dooley** preaches about respect, yet showed none to Jeff, thereby proving he doesn't know the meaning of the word. His constant interruptions of Jeff's letter were annoying, and his attempt to make Jeff look stupid by pointing out all the errors in his spelling were laughable considering the many typographical errors AH has made and continues to make. I've had several letters printed in AH which have suffered from such errors. No one is perfect — certainly not **Kevin Dooley**. His belief that Marvel's editors are needed to shield writers like **Gruenwald** from such letters apparently isn't shared by the editors of CAPTAIN AMERICA, who have printed several of Jeff's letters, including the one in question. I was shocked that **Dooley** would go to such lengths to defend **Gruenwald** by alienating one of his own readers, who has helped to pay his salary by shelling out money every month for AH. Both Jeff and I, as well as a few others, wrote letters to AH protesting **Dooley**'s attitude — none of which have been printed to date. It would seem **Dooley** is too cowardly to face up to his accusers by printing these letters and responding to them. I find it ironic that **Mark Gruenwald**, whom **Dooley** feels needs to be protected from such critical letters, saw fit to print and respond to a letter of mine which criticized him for comments made in his "Mark's Remarks" column of WEST COAST AVENGERS. **Gruenwald** has more guts than **Dooley** gives him credit for, which is more than **Dooley** himself seems to possess. **Dooley** tries to humiliate one of his readers by making an example of him and then refuses to give him, or anyone else, a chance to defend himself.

I, myself, am the victim of a similar crime committed by **Max Allan Collins**. In a letter criticizing DC's "new, revamped" characters printed in AH #129, I came down rather hard on **Mr. Collins** due to statements he made in a CBG editorial, wherein he stated that fans have no reason to get upset at the way Batman was screwed over because Batman is only a comic book character and not a major literary figure as "important" as Ahab or Hamlet. Batman being my favorite character, I was quite naturally incensed. While I don't debate the importance of Ahab and Hamlet to modern literature, I see no reason to compare them to comic book characters by saying Batman is *not* important. This lack of respect toward Batman and comics in general by a writer whom I already had no love for could not be tolerated. **Collins** did not take my reaction very well and responded with an editorial against me in CBG #736. **Collins** claimed that I was the type of "stereotypical misfit comics fan" who enjoys insulting others and has no respect for humanity in general, which couldn't be further from the truth. I show a great deal of respect to those people who *deserve* it. Respect, like most things in life, does not come free — it must be *earned*. **Collins**' statements against Batman and comics in general did nothing to warrant my respect, therefore he did not receive it. I wrote a public apology and explanation of my actions to **Collins** and sent copies to both CBG and AH, but neither magazine saw fit to print them. I have heard that **Collins** is good friends with the CBG editors and no doubt had me "blacklisted" so that none of my letters will see print. Apparently, AH shares this biased attitude against me, as none of my recent letters have seen print there either.

If this is not true, why have none of my letters been printed in either publication? I understand that not *every* letter written will see print, but both Jeff and I have a right to defend ourselves from our accusers. I think the fans would be interested in hearing our responses as well. Yet AH and CBG are obviously depriving the fans from hearing both sides of the story. Why? Are **Collins** and **Dooley** afraid to face up to my comments? If they are so correct, and I am in the wrong, what do they have to fear? The attitude shared by AH and CBG is intolerable. It is simply unfair to try to publicly humiliate readers such as Jeff and myself and then run and hide form our responses. Do you people not realize that, without us fans, you would not have your jobs and be in the position to write such editorials against us in the first place? How can you expect us to respect your opinions when you fail to respect ours? Two wrongs don't make a right. As journalists, it is your responsibility to print both sides of the story and be fair to all parties involved.

I don't expect this letter to see print in AH or CBG either, since it is obvious that both magazines have lost their impartiality and are biased against printing my letters, but I wanted my feelings to be known. I think both AH and CBG have some changes to make in their editorial policies. If they continue to show such a lack of respect to their readers, they may not have them for very long.

Danny DeAngelo
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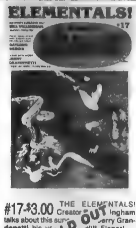

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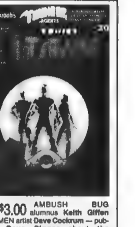

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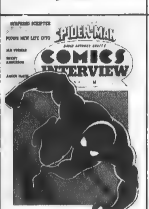

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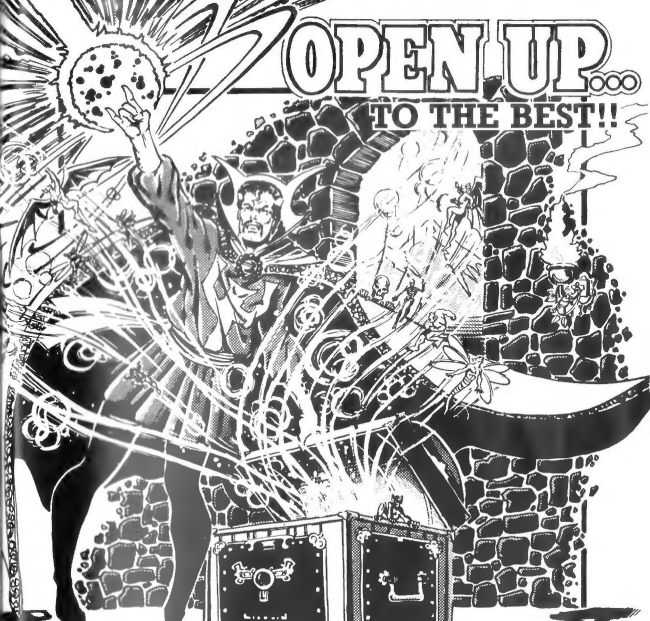

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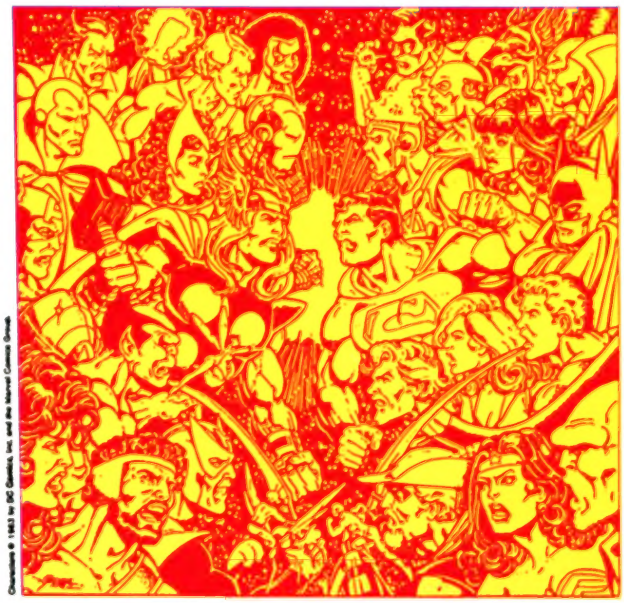

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